

THE ARGOSY.

AUGUST 1, 1872.

WITHIN THE MAZE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "EAST LYNNE."

CHAPTER XXIII.

A NEW LODGER IN PARADISE ROW.

THE buff-coloured blinds were down before Mr. Burtenshaw's windows in the Euston Road, shutting out the glare of the afternoon sun, and throwing an unwholesome kind of tint over the rooms. In one of them, the front room on the first floor, sat the detective himself. It was indeed a kind of office as well as a sitting-room : papers strewed the table ; pigeon holes and shelves, all filled, were ranged along the walls.

Mr. Burtenshaw had a complicated case in hand at that period. Some fresh information had just come in by private letter, and he was giving the best attention of his clear mind to it : his head bent over the table ; his hands resting on the papers immediately before him. Apparently he arrived at some conclusion : for he nodded twice and then began to fold the papers together.

The servant-maid with the flaunty cap tilted on her head entered the room, and said to her master that a gentleman had called and was requesting to see him.

"Who is it?" asked Mr. Burtenshaw.

"He gave no name, sir. It's the same gentleman who called twice or thrice in one day about a fortnight ago : the last time late at night. He's very nice-looking, sir ; might be known for a gentleman a mile off."

The detective carried his thoughts back, and remembered. "You can show him up," he said. "Or—stay, Harriet," he suddenly added, as the girl was leaving the room. "Go down first of all and ask the gentleman his name."

She went as desired, and came up again fixing her absurd cap on its tottering pinnacle.

"The gentleman says, sir, that you don't know him by name, but his solicitors are Messrs. Plunkett and Plunkett."

"Ay. Show him up."

The reader need not be told that it was Karl Andinnian who entered. The object of his visit was to get, if possible, some more information respecting Philip Salter.

Day by day and week by week as they went on, served to show Karl Andinnian that his brother's stay at the Maze was growing more full of risk. Karl and Mrs. Grey, conversing on the matter as opportunity occurred, had nearly set it down as a certainty that Smith was no other than Salter. She felt sure of it. Karl nearly so. And he was persuaded that, once Smith's influence could be removed, Adam might get safely away.

The question ever agitating Karl's brain, in the midnight watches, in the garish day, was—what could he do in the matter?—how proceed in it at all with perfect security? The first thing of course was to ascertain that the man was Salter; the next to make a bargain with him: "You leave my brother free, and I will leave you free." For it was by no means his intention to deliver Salter up to justice. Karl had realized too keenly the distress and horror of a poor fugitive, hiding from the law, to denounce the worst criminal living.

The difficulty lay in the first step—the identification of Smith with Salter. How could he ascertain it? He did not know. He could not see any way to accomplish it with safety. Grimley knew Salter—as in fact did several of Grimley's brotherhood—but, if he once brought Grimley within a bird's-eye view of Smith (being Salter) Grimley would at once lay his grasping hands upon him. All would be over then: for the chances were that Salter in revenge would point his finger to the Maze, and say "There lives a greater criminal than I; your supposed dead convict, Adam Andinnian."

The reader must see the difficulty and the danger. Karl dared not bring Grimley or any other of the police in contact with Smith; he dared not give them a clue to where he might be found: and he had to fall back upon the uncertain and unsatisfactory step of endeavouring to track out the identity himself. "If I could but get to know Burtenshaw's reason for thinking Salter was in England," he exclaimed to himself over and over again, "perhaps it might help me. Suppose I were to ask Burtenshaw again—and press it on him? Something might come of it. After all he could but refuse to tell me."

Just as Karl, after much painful deliberation, had determined to do this, there arrived at Foxwood a summons for his wife. Colonel Cleeve was attacked with sudden illness. In the first shock of it, Mrs. Cleeve feared it might prove fatal, and she sent for Lucy. Karl took her to

Winchester and left her, and at once took up his own abode for a few days in London. The Court had none too much attraction for him as matters stood, and he did not care to be left to entertain Miss Blake. So long as his wife stayed away, he meant to stay.

The following afternoon saw him at the detective's. Mr. Burtenshaw had thought his unknown visitor looking ill before : he looked worse now. "A delicate man with some great care upon him," summed up the officer mentally.

Karl, opening his business, led up to the question he had come to ask. Would Mr. Burtenshaw confide to him the reason for his supposing Philip Salter to be still in England ? At first Mr. Burtenshaw said No ; that it could not, he imagined, concern him or any one else to hear it. Karl pleaded, and pleaded earnestly.

"Whatever you say shall be kept strictly sacred," he urged. "It cannot do harm to any one. I have a powerful motive for asking it."

"And a painful one, too," thought the detective. Karl was leaning forward in his chair, his pale face slightly flushed with his inward emotion, his beautiful grey eyes full of eager entreaty and a strange sadness in their depths.

"Will you impart the motive to me, sir ? "

"No, I cannot," said Karl. "I wish I could, but I cannot."

"I fancy that you must know Salter's retreat, sir—or think you know it : and you want to be assured it is he before you denounce him," spoke the detective, hazarding a shrewd guess.

Karl raised his hand to enforce what he said, speaking solemnly. "Were I able to put my finger this moment upon Salter, I would not denounce him. Nothing would induce me. You may believe me when I say that, in asking for this information, I intend no harm to him."

The detective saw how true were the words. There was something in Karl Andinnian strangely attractive, and he began to waver.

"It is not of much consequence whether I give you the information or whether I withhold it," he resumed. "The fact is this : one of our men who knew Salter, thought he saw him some three or four months ago. He, our man, was on the Great Western line, going to Bath ; in passing a station where they did not stop, he saw (or thought he saw) Salter standing there. He is a cool-judging, keen-sighted officer, and I do not myself think he could have been mistaken. We followed up the scent at once, but nothing has come of it."

Karl made no answer : he was considering. Three or four months ago ? That was about the time, he fancied, that Smith took up his abode at Foxwood. Previous to that he might have been all over England.

"Just before that," resumed the detective, "another of the men struck up a cock-and-bull story that Salter was living in Aberdeen. I

forget the precise reason he had for asserting it : but, like the later tale, it came to nothing."

"That is all you know?" asked Karl.

"Every word. Has the information helped you?"

"Not in the least degree."

There was nothing else for Karl to wait for. His visit had been a fruitless one. "I would have liked to see Grimley once again," he said as he rose. "Is he in town?"

"Grimley is in the house now. At least he ought to be. He is engaged in a case under me, and was to be here at three o'clock for instructions. Will you see him?"

"If you please."

It had occurred to Karl more than once that he should like to describe Smith accurately to Grimley, and ask whether the description tallied with Salter's. He could do it without affording any clue to Smith or his locality.

Mr. Burtenshaw rang and told the maid to send up Grimley, if he had come. In obedience to this, Grimley, in his official clothes, appeared, and another officer with him.

"Oh, I don't want you just yet, Watts," said Mr. Burtenshaw. "Wait down stairs."

"Very well, sir," replied the man. "I may as well give you this, though," he added, crossing the room and placing a small box the size of a five-shilling-piece on the table. Mr. Burtenshaw looked at it curiously, and then slipped it into the drawer at his left hand.

"From Jacob, I suppose?"

"Yes, sir."

The man left the room : and Karl, after a few preliminary words with Grimley, gave an elaborate and close description of Smith's figure and features. "Is it like Salter?" he asked.

"If it isn't him, sir, it's his twin brother," was Grimley's emphatic answer. "As to his looking forty, it is only to be expected. Nothing ages a man like living a life of fear."

Karl remembered how Adam had aged and was ageing, and silently acquiesced. He began to think he saw his way somewhat more clearly; that the man at Foxwood was certainly Salter. Handing over a gratuity to Grimley, and taking leave of Mr. Burtenshaw, he departed, leaving the other two talking of him.

"He has dropped upon Salter," remarked Grimley.

"Yes," said Mr. Burtenshaw. "But he does not intend to deliver him up."

"No!" cried the other in amazement. "Why not, sir?"

"I don't know," said Mr. Burtenshaw. "He said he had no intention of the kind—and I am sure he has not. It seemed to me to be rather the contrary—that he wants to screen him."

"Then he told you, sir, that he *had* found Salter?"

"No, he did not. We were speaking on supposition. I don't know who he is. He keeps his name from me."

The man Watts had entered the room again and heard these few words. He looked at Mr. Burtenshaw.

"Are you speaking of the gentleman just gone out, sir? Don't you know him? I do."

"Why, who is he?" asked Mr. Burtenshaw, who had taken out the little box again, and was opening it.

"Sir Karl Andinnian."

"Nonsense!" exclaimed the detective, aroused to interest. For Sir Karl Andinnian, brother to the criminal who had made so much stir in the world, was a noted name amongst the force.

"It is," said Watts. "I knew him the minute I came in. I was present at the trial in Northampton, sir, when his brother was condemned to death; this gentleman sat all day at the solicitors' table. I had gone down there on that business of Patteson's."

"No wonder he has a sad look," thought the detective. "Adam Andinnian's was a mournful case, and his death was mournful. But what interest can Sir Karl have in Salter?"

There was one, at least, who determined to ascertain, if possible, what that interest was—and that was Mr. Policeman Grimley. A shrewd man by nature, a very shrewd one by experience, he drew his own deductions—and they were anything but favourable to the future security of some of the inhabitants of Foxwood. Could Karl Andinnian have seen what his morning's work had done for him, he would have been ready to sit in sackcloth and ashes, after the manner of the mourners of old.

"Sir Karl's living at Foxwood Court with his young wife," ran Mr. Grimley's thoughts. "Wherever this Salter is, it's not far from him, I'll lay. Hid in Foxwood, and no mistake! I'll get him unearthed if it costs me my place. Let's see; how shall I set about it?"

As a preliminary, he gently sounded Mr. Burtenshaw; but found he could get no help from him: it was not the detective's custom to stir in any matter without orders. Mr. Grimley then slept a night upon it, and in the morning had resolved to strike a bold stroke. Obtaining a private interview with one who was high in the force at Scotland Yard, he denounced Salter, telling of Sir Karl Andinnian's visits to Burtenshaw, and their purport.

"Salter is in hiding at Foxwood, or somewhere in its neighbourhood, sir, as sure as that my name's Dick Grimley," he said. "I want him took. I don't care about the reward—and perhaps it would not be given to me in any case, seeing it was me that let the fellow go—but I want him took. He's a crafty fox, sir, mark you, though; and it will have to be gone about cautiously."

"If Salter be retaken through this declaration of yours, Grimley, I daresay you'll get some of the reward," was the consoling answer. "Who knows the man? It will not do for you to go down."

"No, it wouldn't," acquiesced Grimley. "He knows me; and, once he caught sight of me, he'd make off like a rat sneaking out of a sinking ship. Besides, sir, I couldn't leave that other thing Mr. Burtenshaw has got in hand."

"Well, who knows Salter, I ask?"

"Tatton does, sir; knows him as well as I do; but Salter does not know Tatton. Tatton would be the best man for it, too. Burtenshaw himself can't manage a case like Tatton does when it comes to personal acting."

There was a little more conversation, and then Grimley withdrew, and Tatton was sent for. The grass could not be let grow under their feet in the attempt to re-take that coveted prize, Philip Salter.

This Tatton had begun life as an ordinary policeman: but his talents raised him. He was smart in appearance and manner, had received a fairly good education, conversed well on the topics of the day, could adapt himself to any society he might happen to be in, from that of a true gentleman to a shoe-black, and was found to possess the rare prudence, the certain tact, necessary to undertake the conduct of delicate cases and bring them to a successful conclusion. Grimley was correct, in judging that Tatton would be the man to put on the track of Philip Salter.

The sun was drawing towards the west, and the summer's afternoon was waning, for the days were not so long as they had been a month or two ago, when a gentleman, slight and rather short, with light eyes, fair curly hair, and about thirty years of age, alighted from the London train at Foxwood station. He had a black bag in his hand and a portmanteau in the van, and inquired of the porter the way to Foxwood.

"Do you mean Foxwood proper, sir; or Foxwood, Sir Karl Andonian's place?" returned the porter.

"Foxwood proper, I suppose. It is a village, is it not?"

"Yes, sir. Go down the road to the left, sir, then take the first turning on your right, and it will bring you into Foxwood."

"Thank you," said the gentleman, and slipped a small silver coin into the porter's hand. He knew, nobody better, the value of a silver key: and the chances were that he might another day get gossiping with this station porter about the neighbourhood and its politics.

Bag in hand, he speedily found himself in the heart of Foxwood. Casting about his eyes on this side and that, they settled on Paradise Row, on which the sun was shining, and on a white embossed card hanging in the first-floor window of the middle house, which card had

on it in large letters "Apartments furnished." At the open entrance door stood a widow woman in a clean cap and smart black silk apron. Mrs. Jinks was en grande toilette.

"It looks likely," said the stranger to himself. "Madame there will talk her tongue sore, I see, once prompted." And going up to the door, he politely took off his hat as he might to a duchess.

"You have apartments to let, I think, madam?"

"Good gracious!" cried the Widow Jinks, taken by surprise—for she was only looking out for the muffin-boy, and the slanting rays of the sun were dazzling her eyes. "I beg pardon, sir; apartments, did you say? Yes, sir, I've got my drawing-room just emptied."

It happened that an elderly lady from Basham and her granddaughters had been lodging there for a month, the young ladies being ardent disciples of Mr. Cattacombe; but they had now left, and the drawing-room was ready to be let again. Mrs. Jinks went on to explain this, rather volubly.

"I will go up and look at it, if you please," said the stranger.

The widow ushered him along the passage towards the stairs, treading softly as she passed the parlour door.

"I've got a Reverend Gent lodging in there," she said, "minister of the new church, St. Jerome's. He has a meeting every Thursday evening, for Scripture reading, or something of that—exercises, I think they call it. This is Thursday, and they be all expected. But he wants his tea first, and that there dratted muffin-boy's not round yet. The reverend gent have dropped asleep on three chairs in his shirt sleeves, while he waits for it."

The stranger liked the drawing-room very much; the sun made it cheerful, he said, and he liked the bed-room behind it. Mrs. Jinks rather hesitated at letting the two rooms alone. She generally let the bed-rooms at the top of the house with them.

"How long shall you be likely to stay, sir?" questioned she.

"I do not know. It may be a week, it may be a month, it may be more. I am seeking country air and rest for my health, ma'am, and want a quiet place to read in. I shall not give you much trouble."

Mrs. Jinks agreed to let him have the rooms at last, demanding a few shillings over the usual terms for the two: a bird in the hand, she thought, was worth two in the bush. Next she asked for references.

"I cannot refer you to any one here," he said, "for I don't know a soul in the place, and not a soul in it knows me. I will pay you every week in advance; and that I presume will do as well as references."

He laid down the sum agreed upon and a sovereign beside it. "You will be so good as to get in for me a few things to eat and drink, Mrs. Jinks. I should like to have some tea first of all, if convenient, and one of those muffins you spoke of. Well buttered, if you please."

"Yes, sir; certainly, sir. We get muffins at Foxwood all the year

round, sir, on account of there being company in the place at summer time. Buttered muffins and cress, sir, is uncommonly good together."

"Are they? I'll have some cress too."

Telling her, as well as he could remember, what things he should want got in, besides butter and muffins, and bidding her to add anything else that she thought he might want, he picked up his black bag to take it into the bed-room. Mrs. Jinks in her politeness begged him to let her take it, but he said certainly not.

"Is it all the luggage you've got, sir, this?"

"My portmanteau is at the station. I could not order it on until I knew where I should be; or, in fact, whether I should stay at Foxwood at all. Had I not found lodgings to my mind, ma'am, I might have gone on somewhere else."

"Foxwood's the loveliest, healthiest spot you can find, sir," cried the widow, eagerly. "Sweet walks about it, there is."

"So I was told by my medical man. One wants nice rural walks, Mrs. Jinks, after reading hard."

"So one does, sir. You are reading up for college, I suppose? I had a young gent here once from Oxford. He got plucked, too, afterwards. There's the muffin-boy!" added Mrs. Jinks, in delight, as the fierce ring of a bell and the muffin-call was heard beneath. "Oh, I beg pardon, sir, what name?"

The gentleman, who had his head and hands just then in his bag, merely responded that he was a stranger. Mrs. Jinks, in the hurry to be gone, and confused with the ringing and the calling below, caught up the answer as "Strange."

"A Mr. Strange," she said to herself, going down with the money in her hand. "And one of the nicest gents I ever come across. 'Put plenty o' butter,' says he. *He ain't* one as 'll look sharp after every crumb and odd and end, as too many of 'em does, and say where's the rest of this, that it don't come up, and where's the remainder of that."

Mrs. Jinks had a young help-mate when she was what she called in "full let;" a young damsel of fourteen, who wore her hair in a pink net. Sending the girl flying to the general shop for various things, she set on to toast the muffins; and tea was speedily served in both rooms. Mr. Cattacomb was asleep on the three chairs, in his shirt sleeves. He was beginning to find his work somewhat hard. What with the duties in the church, the services, and sermons, and confessions, and the duties out of church connected with little boys and girls, and with those anxious Christians who never left him alone, the young ladies, Mr. Cattacomb was often considerably fatigued; and it was under consideration whether his former coadjutor, the Reverend Damon Puff, should not be summoned to assist him.

"Here's your tea, sir," said Mrs. Jinks, "and a beautiful hot muffin. couldn't get it up afore, for the muffin-boy was late."

"My tea, is it, Mrs. Jinks?" replied Mr. Cattacomb, slowly rising.
"Thank you. I am dead tired."

And, perhaps in consequence of the fatigue, or that Mrs. Jinks was not worth any display, it might have been observed that the affectation, so characteristic of the reverend gentleman when in society, had entirely disappeared now. Indeed, it seemed at this undress moment that Mr. Cattacomb was a simple mannered, pleasant man.

"I've been in luck this afternoon, sir, and have let my drawing-room floor," continued the widow, as she settled the tea-tray before him. "It's a Mr. Strange, sir, that's took it; a gent reading for Oxford, and out of health. His doctor have ordered him into the country for change, and told him he'd find quiet and nice walks at Foxwood. You may hear his boots walking about overhead, sir. He's as nice and liberal a gent as ever I had to do with."

"Glad to hear it," said Mr. Cattacomb. "We shall want more chairs here presently, you know, Mrs. Jinks."

The tea-tray had scarcely disappeared, and Mr. Cattacomb put on his coat and his fascinating company manners, before the company began to arrive. On these Thursday evenings Mr. Cattacomb gave at his own home, a private lecture, descriptive of some of the places mentioned in holy Scripture. They were attended by all his flock at St. Jerome's and by several young ladies from Basham. Of course it necessitated a great many seats; and the new lodger above was yet at his tea, when Mrs. Jinks appeared, her face redder than usual with running about, and begged the loan of "Mr. Strange's" chairs, explaining what they were wanted for.

"Oh, certainly: take them all, Mrs. Jinks," replied he, in the most accommodating manner possible. "I can sit upon the table."

Mrs. Jinks left him one, however, and went down with the rest. He found out she had taken up the notion that his name was "Strange," and laughed a little.

"Some misunderstanding on her part when I said I was a stranger," thought he. "All right; I'll not contradict it."

While the bumping and thumping went on, caused by the progress of chairs down from the chambers and up from the kitchen, and the knocker and the bell kept up a perpetual duet, Mr. Strange (we will call him so at present ourselves) put on his hat to go round and order his portmanteau to be sent from the station. As he passed the parlour door, it stood open; no one was looking his way, and he had a good view of the interior, taking in the scene and the details with his observant eyes. A comfortable room, containing a dozen or two charming and chattering ladies, and a perfect epitome of tasty and luxurious objects that had been worked by fair fingers. Cushions, anti-macassars, slippers, scrolls, drawings surrounded by leather frames, ornamental mats in dozens, cosies for tea-pots, lamp shades and stands,

flowers in wax under shades, sweet-flowers from hot-houses in water, and other things too numerous to mention.

"A man beset, that clergyman," thought Mr. Strange, with a silent laugh. "He should get married, and stop it. Perhaps he likes it, though: some of them do who have more vanity than brains."

So he ordered his portmanteau to No. 5, Paradise Row, contriving to leave the same impression at the station that he had given Mrs. Jinks—a reading man in search of quiet and health.

Mrs. Jinks presided at the arrival of the portmanteau, and saw some books taken out of it. While her lodger's back was turned, she took the liberty of peeping into one or two of them, and, finding their language was what she could not read, supposed it to be Greek or Latin. Before the night was over, all Paradise Row, upwards and downwards, had been regaled with the news of her new lodger, a "scholar-gent, by name of Strange, who had come down to read and get up his health, and had brought his Greek and Latin books with him."

CHAPTER XXIV.

NURSE CHAFFEN ON DUTY.

How short a period of time may serve to bring forth vital chances and changes. Sir Karl and Lady Andinnian were absent only a week, yet before they returned a stranger had taken up his abode at Foxwood, indirectly brought to it by Karl himself; and something had happened at the Maze.

Lucy was out amidst her plants and shrubs and flowers the evening of her return, when the shadows were lengthening on the grass. Karl was writing letters indoors; Miss Blake had hurried up from dinner to go to vespers. In spite of the estrangement and misery that pervaded the home atmosphere, Lucy felt glad to be there again. The meeting with her husband after the week's entire separation, had caused her pulses to quicken, and her heart to bound with something that was very like joy. Colonel Cleeve was out of all danger; nearly well again. He and his wife had pressed Lucy to prolong her stay, had asked Sir Karl to come and join her; and they both considered it somewhat unaccountable that Lucy should have persisted in declining. Theresa was alone at Foxwood, was the chief plea of excuse she urged: the real impediment being that she and Karl could not stay there together without risk of the terms on which they lived becoming known. So Karl, on the day appointed, went from London to Winchester, and brought Lucy home.

For the forbearance she had exercised, the patient silence she had maintained, Lucy had in a degree received the reward during the sojourn with her father and mother. More than ever was it brought home to her conviction then, that she would almost rather die than betray it.

It would have inflicted on them so much pain and shame. It would have lowered herself so in their sight, and in the sight of those old and young friends who had known her in her girlhood, and who whispered their sense of what her happiness must now be, and their admiration of her attractive husband. "Martyrdom, rather than that!" said Lucy, clasping her hands with fixed resolution, as she paced the grass, and thought.

Karl came up to her with two letters in his hand. She was then sitting under the acacia tree. The sun had set, but in the west shone a flood of golden light. The weather in the daytime was still hot as in the middle of that hot summer, but the evenings and nights were cool. Lucy's shawl lay beside her.

"It is time to put it on," said Karl—and he wrapped it round her himself carefully. It caused her to see the address of the two letters in his hand. One was to Plunkett and Plunkett; the other to Mrs. Cleeve.

"You have been writing to mamma!" she exclaimed.

"She asked me to be sure and let her have one line to say you got home safely. I have given your love, Lucy."

"Thank you, Karl. And now you are going to the post."

"And now I am going to the post. And I must make haste, or I shall find the box shut."

He took his hand from her shoulder, where it had rested, and crossed the grass, Lucy looking after him.

"How thoughtful and kind he is!" she soliloquised. "It is just as though he loved me." And her imagination went off wandering at random, as imagination will. Once more she reverted to that former possibility—of condoning the past and becoming reconciled again. It was *very* good of him, and she felt it so, to have stayed that week in London. She fancied he had done it that she might know he did not go to the Maze. And so, the evening shadows came on, and still Lucy sat there, lost in her dreams.

Miss Blake, it has been said, had hurried from dinner, to attend vespers. As she turned into the road she saw a boy a little in advance of her on the other side, his basket on his arm. It was the doctor's boy, Cris Lumley, against whom Miss Blake had a grievance. She crossed over and caught him up just as he rang at the Maze gate.

"Now, Cris Lumley, what have you to say for yourself? For three days you have not appeared at class."

"Tain't my fault," said Cris Lumley, who was just as impudent as he looked; a very different boy indeed from civil-natured Tom Pepp. "It be master's."

"How is it your master's?"

"What master says is this here: 'I be to attend to him and my place; or I be to give it up, if I wants to kick up my heels all day at school.'

"I don't believe you," said Miss Blake. "I shall speak to Mr. Moore."

"Just do then," said the independent boy.

"The fact of the case is no doubt this, Cris Lumley—that you play truant for half the day sometimes, on the plea of being all that while at school."

"Master said another thing, he did," resumed the gentleman, ignoring the last accusation. "He said as if Parson Sumner warn't no longer good enough for me to learn religion from, he'd get another boy in my place, that he was good enough for. There! you may ask him whether he said it or not."

Declining to bandy further words with him, until she should have seen the surgeon, Miss Blake was hastening on, when the fringe of her mantle caught against his medicine basket. It reminded her that some one must be ill. Battling for a moment with her curiosity, but not for long, she condescended to inquire who was ill at the Maze.

"It be the missis," replied Cris.

"The mistress! Do you mean Mrs. Grey?"

Mr. Lumley nodded.

"What is the matter with *her*?"

"Got a baby," said the boy shortly.

For the instant Miss Blake was struck dumb. She did not believe it.

"He were born yesterday," added the boy. "This be some physic for him: and this be the missis's."

Throwing back the lid of one end of his basket, Miss Blake saw two bottles, done up in white paper. The larger one was addressed "Mrs. Grey," the small one "Mrs. Grey's infant."

She turned away without another word, feeling ready to sink with the weight of the world's iniquity. It pressed upon her most unpleasantly throughout the evening service at St. Jerome's, and for once Miss Blake was inattentive to the exhortations of the Rev. Guy.

To return to Lucy. It grew dusk and more dusk; and she at length went in-doors. Karl came in, bringing Mr. Moore, whom he had overtaken near the gate: and almost close upon that, Miss Blake returned. The sight of the doctor, sitting there with Karl and Lucy, brought back all Miss Blake's indignation. It had been at boiling-point for the last hour, and now it bubbled over. The wisest course no doubt would have been to hold her tongue: but her righteous condemnation forbade that. There could be no fear of risking Jane Shore's sheet of penance in repeating this. It was her duty to speak: she fully believed that: her duty to open Lucy's obtuse eyes—and who knew but Sir Karl might be brought to his senses through the speaking? The surgeon and Lucy were sitting near the window in the sweet still twilight; Karl stood back by the mantel-piece.

"I—I have heard some curious news," began Miss Blake in a low, reluctant tone, having waited for some discussion about flowers to die away. "I heard it from that boy of yours, Mr. Moore. He says there's a baby at the Maze."

"Yes," readily acquiesced Mr. Moore. "A baby-boy, born yesterday."

And Miss Blake, standing at angles between the two, saw a motion of startled surprise on the part of Karl Andinnian. Lucy looked up, simply not understanding. After a pause, during which no one spoke, Miss Blake, in language softened to ambiguousness, took upon herself to intimate that, in her opinion, the Maze had no business with a baby.

Mr. Moore laughed pleasantly. "That, I imagine, is Mrs. Grey's concern," he said.

Lucy understood now; she felt startled almost to sickness. "Is it Mrs. Grey who has the baby?" was on the point of her tongue: but she did not speak it.

"Where is Mrs. Grey's husband?" cried uncompromising Miss Blake.

"In London, I fancy, just now," said the doctor.

"*Has she one at all, Mr. Moore?*"

"Good gracious, yes," cried the hearty-natured surgeon. "I'd answer for it with my life, nearly. She's as nice a young lady as I'd ever wish to attend, and good too."

"For Lucy's sake, I'll go on; for his sake, standing there in his shame," thought Miss Blake, in her rectitude. "Better things may come of it: otherwise I'd drop the hateful subject for ever."

"Mr. Moore," she added aloud, "Why do you say the husband is in London?"

"Because Mrs. Grey said something to that effect," he answered. "At least, I understood her words to imply as much; but she was very ill at the moment, and I did not question further."

"It has hitherto been represented that Mr. Grey was travelling abroad," pursued Miss Blake, with a tone and a stress on the "Mr. Grey."

"I know it has. But he may have returned. I am sure she said she had been up to London two or three weeks ago—and I thought she meant to imply that she went to meet her husband. It may have been a false conclusion I drew; but I certainly thought it."

Sir Karl took a step forward. "I can answer for it that Mrs. Grey did go up," he said, "for I chanced to travel in the same carriage with her. Getting into the uptrain at the station one day, I found Mrs. Grey seated there."

Lucy glanced towards him as he spoke. There was no embarrassment in his countenance; his voice was easy and open as though he had spoken of a stranger. Her own face looked white as death.

"You did!" cried the doctor. "Did she tell you she was going up to meet Mr. Grey?"

"No, she did not. I put her into a cab at the terminus, and that's all I know about it. It was broiling hot, I remember."

"Well," resumed the doctor, whether it was to meet her husband or whether not, to London she went for a day or two in the broiling heat—as Sir Karl aptly terms it—and she managed to fatigue herself so much that she has not felt well since, and has never been able to get over the fatigue. This young gentleman, who chose to take upon himself to make his appearance in the world yesterday, was not due for a couple of months to come."

Lucy rose and left the room, she and her white face. Karl followed her with his eyes: he had seen the whiteness.

"Is it a healthy child?" he asked.

"Quite so," replied the surgeon; "but very small. The worst of these little monkeys is, you can't send them back again with a whipping, when they make too much haste, and tell them to come again at proper time. Mrs. Grey's very ill."

"Is she!" cried Karl.

"Yes. And there's no nurse and no anything; matters are all at sixes and sevens."

"I hope she'll do well!" breathed Karl.

"So do I."

Miss Blake looked at the two speakers. The one seemed just as open as the other. She thought what a finished adept Karl Andinnian was getting to be in deception.

The doctor took his leave. He was, as he told them, on his way to the Maze then. Karl went with him to the outer gate, and then paced the lawn in the evening twilight.

"After all, it is well it's over," ran his thoughts. "This expected illness was always putting itself in view when I was planning to get away Adam. Once Rose is well again, the ground will be, so far, clear. But good heavens! how it increases the risk! Here's Moore going in at any hour of the day or night, I suppose—and Adam so incautious! Well, I think he will take care and keep in seclusion for his own sake. And for myself—it brings more complication," he added with a sigh. "The child is the heir now instead of me: and the whole property must eventually come to him. Poor Lucy! I saw she felt it. Oh, she may well be vexed! Does she quite comprehend, I wonder, who this baby is, and what it will take from us?—Foxwood amidst the rest? I wish I had never married! I wish a merciful heaven had interposed to prevent it."

When Mr. Moore, some eight-and-forty hours previously, received a hurried visit from Mrs. Grey's servant, Ann Hopley, at the dusk of evening, and heard what she had to say, he was excessively astonished,

not having had the slightest idea that his services would be wanted in any such way at the Maze. It is possible that some doubts of Mrs. Grey's position crossed his mind at the moment: but he was a good man, and he made it a rule never to think ill if he could by possibility think good; and when he came to see Mrs. Grey, he felt sure she was all she should be. The baby was born on the following morning. Since then the doctor, as Karl expressed it, had been going in at all hours: Ann Hopley invariably preceding him through the maze, and conducting him out of it again at his departure.

Three or four days went on. The doctor passed in and out, and never a notion entered his head that the Maze was tenanted by any save its ordinary inmates, or that one under a ban was lying there in concealment. Ann Hopley, letting her work go how it would, attended on her mistress and the baby; the old gardener was mostly busy in his garden as usual. On the fifth or sixth day, when Mr. Moore paid his morning visit, he found Mrs. Grey worse. There were rather dangerous symptoms of fever.

"Has she been exciting herself?" he privately asked of Ann Hopley.

"She did a little last night, sir," was the incautious admission.

"What about?"

"Well, sir—chiefly talking."

"Chiefly talking!" repeated the doctor. "But what were you about to let her talk? Whatever possessed you to talk to her?"

Ann Hopley was silent. She could have said that it was not with her Mrs. Grey had talked, but with her husband.

"I must send a nurse in," he resumed. "Not only to see that she is kept quiet, but to attend to her constantly. It is not possible that you can be with her always with your housework to do."

But all of this Ann Hopley most strongly combated. She could attend to her mistress, and would, and did attend to her, she urged, and a nurse she would not have in the house. From the first, this question of a nurse had been a bone of contention: the doctor wanting to send one in; Ann Hopley and also Mrs. Grey strenuously objecting. So once more the doctor yielded, and let the matter drop, inwardly resolving that if his patient did not get better during the day, he should take French leave to pursue his own course.

Late in the afternoon he went in again. Mrs. Grey was worse: flushed, restless, and slightly delirious. The doctor said nothing; but when he got home, he sent a summons for Mrs. Chaffen. A skilled nurse, she; and first cousin to the Widow Jinks, both in respect to kin and to love of gossip.

That same evening after dark, when Adam Andinnian was sitting in his wife's room, and Ann Hopley was concocting something in a saucepan over the kitchen fire, the gate bell clanged out. It had been nothing unusual to hear it these last few days at any hour; and the

woman, putting the saucepan on the hob for safety, went forth, key in hand.

No sooner had she unlocked the gate than Mr. Moore brushed past her, followed by a little thin woman with a bundle. Ann Hopley stared : but never a word said he.

"Keep close to me, and you won't lose yourself," cried he to the little woman ; and went tearing off at a double-quick pace through the intricacies of the maze.

Ann Hopley stood like one bewildered. For one thing, she had not possessed the slightest notion that the surgeon knew his way through, for he had given no special indication of it, always having followed her. He could have told her that he had learnt the secret of the maze long before she came to Foxwood. It had been shown to him in old Mr. Throckton's time, whom he had attended for years. And, to see a second person pass in, startled her. All she could do was to lock the gate, and follow them.

On went the doctor ; the little woman keeping close to his coat tails ; and they were beyond the maze in no time. In, at the open portico, passed he, and made direct for the stairs. Ann Hopley, miles behind, could only pray in agony that her master might escape their view.

But he did not. The doctor had nearly reached the top of the staircase, when a gentleman, tall, and in evening dress, suddenly presented himself in front, apparently looking who it might be, coming up. He drew back instantly, strode noiselessly along the corridor, and disappeared within a door at its extreme end. It all passed in a moment of time. What with the speed, and what with the obscurity of the stairs and passages, any one, less practical than the doctor, might have questioned whether or not it had happened at all.

"That's Mr. Grey, come down," thought he. "But he seems to wish not to be noticed. Be it so."

Had he cared to make any remark upon it to Mrs. Grey, he could not, for she was quite delirious that night. And, as he saw no further sign of the gentleman at any subsequent visit, he merely supposed that Mr. Grey had come down for a few hours and had gone again. And the matter passed from his mind.

It did not so pass from the nurse's. Mrs. Chaffen had distinctly seen the gentleman in evening attire looking down the stairs at her and the doctor ; she saw him whisk away, as she phrased it, and go into the further room. In the obscure light, Mrs. Chaffen made him out to be a very fine-looking gentleman with beautiful white teeth. She had keen eyesight and she saw that much : she had also a weakness for fine-looking men, and felt glad that one so fine as this should be in the house. It could not make much difference to her ; but she liked gentlemen to be in a dwelling where she might be located : they made it lively, and

were pleasant to talk to. Like the doctor, she supposed this was Mrs. Grey's husband, come down at last.

She neither saw nor heard more of the gentleman that night, though she sat up with her patient. Neither did she on the following day—and then she began to think it somewhat odd. At dusk, when Mrs. Grey and the baby were both sleeping, she went down stairs.

Ann Hopley's directions to her had been "Ring for everything you want, and I will bring it up :" her meals also were brought punctually. But nurses are but human. Mrs. Chaffen was longing for a word of social gossip, and down stairs she went, and made her way to the kitchen. Ann Hopley was in it, ironing at a table under the window.

"What do you want?" cried she in a quick, startled tone, as the nurse appeared.

"I thought I'd get you to give me a sup o' beer, Mrs. Hopley," was the answer. "I'm a'most faint, stopping so long in that there room with its smell of ether about."

"Why could you not have rung? I'll bring it up to you."

In the very teeth of this plain intimation, Mrs. Chaffen sat herself down on a chair by the ironing board, and began fanning her face with a corner of her white apron. "The missis is asleep," she said: "she's a sight better to-night; and I shall stop here while I drink the beer for a bit of relief and change."

Ann Hopley took a small jug that was hanging on the dresser shelves, went down in the cellar, brought up the beer and poured it into a tumbler. Mrs. Chaffen took a good draught and smacked her lips.

"That ain't bad beer, is it, Mrs. Hopley?"

"Not at all," said Ann Hopley. "Drink it up."

She would not go on with her ironing, lest it might seem like an excuse for the nurse to linger; she stood by the fire, waiting, and evidently wanting her gone.

"Your husband's a taking of it easy, out there!"

Ann glanced from the window, and saw the gardener seated amongst a heap of drying weeds, his back against the tool house, and a pipe in his mouth.

"He has done his work, I suppose, for the day," she said.

"And he knows his missis's eyes can't be upon him just now," added the nurse, taking another draught. "He don't hardly look strong enough to do all this here big garden."

"You couldn't offend Hopley worse than by telling him that. His mistress says nothing about it now, it puts him up so. Last May when he was laid up in bed with the rheumatis, she ordered a gardener in for two or three days to clear up some of the rough work. Hopley was not at all grateful : he only grumbled at it when he got about again."

"It's just like them good old-fashioned servants that takes pride in their work," said the nurse. "There's not many of the young uns like

'em. Is that a hump, or only a stoop of the shoulders?" continued she, ignoring good manners.

"It used to be only a stoop, Mrs. Chaffen. But those things, you know, always get worse with years."

Mrs. Chaffen nodded. "And gardening work, when one has a natural stoop, is the worst sort of work a man can take to."

"True," assented Ann. She had spoken absently all along, and kept glancing round and listening as though ill at ease. One might have fancied she feared a ghost was coming down the staircase.

"What be you a harkening at?" asked Mrs. Chaffen.

"For fear the baby should cry."

"The baby's in a sweet sleep, he is. I wonder whether he'll get reared?—he's very little. Where's the gentleman?" abruptly inquired Mrs. Chaffen after a pause.

"What gentleman?"

"Mrs. Grey's husband. Him we saw here last night."

If Ann Hopley had been apathetic before, she was fully aroused to interest now, and turned her eyes upon the nurse with a long stare.

"Why what is it that you are talking of?" she asked. "There has been no gentleman here. Mrs. Grey's husband is abroad."

"But I saw him," persisted the nurse. "He stood right at the head of the staircase when me and Dr. Moore was a going up it."

Then they went at it, asserting and re-asserting. Nurse Chaffen protesting, by all that was truthful, that she did see the gentleman : Ann Hopley denying in the most emphatic language that any gentleman had been there, or could have been. Poor woman! in her faithful zeal for her master's safety ; in her terrible inward fear lest this might bring danger upon him, she went so far as to vow by heaven that no living soul had been in the house or about it, save her mistress and the infant, herself and Hopley.

The assertion had its effect. Nurse Chaffen was not an irreligious woman, though she did indulge in unlimited gossip, and love a glass of beer when she could get it ; and she could not believe that a thing so solemnly asserted was a lie. She felt puzzled to death : her eyes were good and had never played her false yet.

"Have ye got a ghost in the house?" she asked at length, edging a little nearer to the ironing board and to Ann Hopley.

"I have never seen or heard of one."

"It's a rare old place, this house. Folks said all kinds of queer things about it in Miser Throckton's time."

"He left no ghost in it, that I know of," repeated Ann Hopley.

"Well I never! I can't make it out. You might a'most as soon tell me to believe there's no truth in the Bible. He stood atop o' the stairs, looking down at me and the doctor. It was dusk, I grant; a'most dark; but I saw him as plain as plain could be. He had got white

teeth, and a suit of black on ; and he went off into that door that's at the fur end of the passage."

A keen observer might have detected a sleeping terror in Ann Hopley's eyes : but she was habitually of calm manner and she showed perfect calmness now, knowing how much was at stake. A great deal had all along depended upon her ready presence of mind, her easy equanimity in warding off suspicion : it depended more than ever on her at this trying time, and she had her wits at hand.

" Your eyes and the dusk must have misled you, Mrs. Chaffen," she quietly rejoined. " Is it possible—I put it to yourself—that any gentleman could be in this house, and me and Hopley not know it? That night I had run down from my mistress's room, where she was lying off her head with the fever and the baby asleep in its little bed by the fire, and was making a drop of gruel in the kitchen here, when the ring at the gate came. I had a great mind to send Hopley to open it : I heard him out yonder putting up his tools for the night : but I should have had to go close up to make him understand, for he's as deaf as a post ; and his knees would have been a long while making their way through the maze. So I went myself: it seemed less trouble ; and I let in you and the doctor. As to any soul's having been in the place, save me and Hopley and the missis and baby, it's a moral impossibility : and if necessary I could swear to it."

" Where do that there end door lead to ? " questioned Mrs. Chaffen, only half convinced—and that against her will.

" It leads to nowhere. It's a sitting-room. Mrs. Grey does not often use it."

" Well, this beats everything, this do. I'm sure I could have swore that a gentleman was there."

" It was a mistake. Hark ! there *is* the baby."

Nurse Chaffen flew up the stairs. Ann Hopley went on with her ironing ; her face, now that she was alone, allowing its terror scope.

" It is so foolish of my master to run risks just at this time, when the house is liable to be invaded by strangers ! " she ejaculated wearily. " But who was to foresee the doctor would come bursting in like that ? Pray Heaven master doesn't do it again while that woman's here."

Mrs. Chaffen sat in the sick room, the awakened baby occupying her lap, and the problem her mind. Never in all her life had she felt to be in so entire a mist. Ann Hopley she could not and would not disbelieve : and yet, in her reasoning moments she was as fully persuaded that a gentleman had been there, and that she had seen him, as that the sun shone in the sky.

A day or two went on ; and the subject was never out of the woman's mind. Now leaning to this side of the question, now wavering to that, she could not arrive at any positive conclusion. But, taking one thing with another, she thought the house was rather a strange house. Why did

Ann Hopley want to keep her for ever in that one room?—as she evidently did want—and prevent her from moving freely about the house? An unfortunate doubt took possession of her—was there a gentleman in the house, after all; and, for some reason or another, keeping himself concealed? Unfortunate, because it was to bear unpleasant fruit.

"Be whipped if it is not the most likely solution o' the matter I've thought of yet!" cried she, striking her hand on the tall fender. "But how do he manage to hide himself from Ann Hopley?—and how do he get his victuals? Sure-ly she can't have been deceiving of me! She'd not be so wicked."

From that time Mrs. Chaffen looked curiously about her, poking and peering around whenever she had the opportunity. One morning in particular, when Mrs. Grey was asleep, and she saw Ann go out to answer the butcher's bell, a dish in her hand to receive the meat, and Hopley was safe at the end of the garden, for she could hear him rolling the path there, Mrs. Chaffen made use of the occasion. She went along the passage to the door where the gentleman had disappeared, and found herself in a dull sitting-room wainscoted with mahogany, its wide, modern window looking to the maze. Keenly Mrs. Chaffen's eyes darted about the room: but there was no other outlet that she could see. The dark paneling went from the door to the window, and from the window round to the door again. After that, she made her way into the small angular passages that the house seemed to abound in: two of them were bed-rooms with the beds made up, the others seemed to be out of use. None of them were locked: the doors of most of them stood open: but certainly in not one of them was there any trace of a hidden gentleman.

That same day when she had finished her dinner, brought up to her as usual, she hastily put the things together on the tray and darted off with it down stairs. Mrs. Grey feebly called to her; but the nurse, conveniently deaf, went on without hearing. The staircase was angular, the turnings were short, and Mrs. Chaffen, as she went through the last one, gave the tray an inadvertent knock against the wall. Its plates rattled, its glasses jingled, betraying their approach: and—if ever she had heard a bolt slipped in her life, she felt sure she heard one slipped inside the kitchen door.

"It's me, Mrs. Hopley, with the tray," she called out, going boldly on. "Open the door."

No answer. No signs of being heard. Everything seemed perfectly still. Mrs. Chaffen managed to lodge the tray against the door-post and hold it steady with one hand, while she tried the door with the other. But she could not open it.

"Mrs. Hopley, it's me with the tray. Please open."

It was opened then. Ann Hopley flung it wide and stood there staring, a saucepan in her hand. "What, have you brought the things

down!" she exclaimed in a voice of surprise. "Why on earth couldn't you have let them be till I came up?"

The nurse carried her tray onwards, and put it on the board under the window. At the table, not having been polite enough to his wife to take off his flapping straw hat in her presence, sat the gardener, munching his dinner as toothless people best can, his back to the light.

"Why did you keep me waiting at the door?" asked the nurse, not pleased.

"Did you wait?" returned Ann Hopley. "I was in the back place there, washing out the saucepans. You might have come in without knocking."

"The door was bolted."

"The door bolted!—not it," disputed Ann. "The latch has got a nasty trick of catching, though."

"This is fine weather, Mr. Hopley!" said the nurse, leaving the point uncontested, and raising her voice.

He seemed to be, as Ann had formerly expressed it, as deaf as a post. Neither turning his head nor answering, but keeping on at his dinner. Ann bent her head to his ear.

"The nurse, Mrs. Chaffen, spoke to you, Hopley. She says what fine weather it is."

"Ay, ay, ma'am," said he then; "fine and bright."

What more might have passed was stopped by the ringing of Mrs. Grey's bell; a loud, long, impatient peal. The nurse turned to run.

"For pity's sake don't leave her again, Mrs. Chaffen!" called out Ann Hopley with some irritation. "If you do, I shall complain to Mr. Moore. You'll cause the fever to return."

"I could be upon my oath that she slipped the bolt to keep me out," thought the nurse, hurrying along. "Drat the cross-grained woman! Does she fear I shall poison her kitchen?"

CHAPTER XXV.

WATCHING THE HOUSE.

MRS. JINKS's new lodger, Mr. Strange, was making himself at home, not only at Mrs. Jinks's, but in the village generally, and gradually getting familiar with its stories and its politics. Talking with the men at the station one hour, chatting to the field labourers the next; stepping into the shops to buy tobacco, or paper, or lozenges, or what not, and staying a good twenty minutes before he came out again: Mr. Strange was ingratiating himself with the local world.

But though he gossipped freely enough without doors and with Mrs. Jinks within, he did not appear anxious to cultivate intimacy with the social sphere; but rather avoided it. The Rev. Mr. Cattacomb,

relying on the information that the new lodger was a gentleman reading for Oxford, had taken the initiative and made an advance to acquaintanceship. Mr. Strange, while receiving it with perfect civility, intimated that he was obliged to decline it. His health, he said, left him no alternative, and he had come to the country for entire quiet. As to his reading for Oxford, it was a mistake, he hinted. He was reading; but not with a view of going to any college. After that, the gentlemen bowed when they chanced to meet in the passages or out of doors, exchanged perhaps a remark on the fine weather; and there it ended.

The reader has not failed to detect that this "Mr. Strange," the name caught up so erroneously by Mrs. Jinks, was in reality the shrewd detective officer sent down by Scotland Yard in search of Philip Salter. His instructions were, not to hurry matters to an abrupt conclusion and so miss his game, but to track out Salter patiently and prudently. A case on which he had been recently engaged *had* been hurried and lost. Circumstances connected with it had caused him to lose sight of his usual prudence: he thought he was justified in doing what he did, and acted for the best: but the result proved him to have been wrong. No fear, with this failure on his mind, and the caution of his masters in his ears, that he would be in over much hurry now. In point of fact he could not if he would, for there was nothing to make hurry over.

For some time not a trace of any kind could Mr. Strange find of Philip Salter. People with whom he gossipped talked to him without any reserve; he was sure of that; and he would artfully lead the conversation and twist it the way he pleased; but he could hear nothing of any one likely to be Salter. The man might as well never have been within a hundred miles of Foxwood; for the matter of that, he might as well never have had existence, for all the trace there was left of him. Scotland Yard, however, was sure that Salter was to be found not far off, and that was enough: Mr. Strange, individually, felt sure of it also.

Knowing what he had been told of the visits of Sir Karl Andinnian to Detective Burtenshaw, and their object, Mr. Strange's attention was especially directed to Foxwood Court. Before he had been three days in the place, he had won the heart of Giles the footman (much at liberty just then, through the temporary absence of his master and mistress) and treated him to five glasses of best ale at different times at different public-houses. Giles, knowing no reason for reticence, freely described all he knew about Foxwood Court: the number of inmates, their names, their duties, their persons, and all the rest of it. Not the least idea penetrated his brain that the gentleman had any motive for listening to the details, save the whiling away of some of the day's idle hours. There was certainly no one at the Court that could

be at all identified with the missing man ; and, so far, Mr. Strange had lost his time and his ale money. Of course he put questions as to Sir Karl's movements—where he went to in the day, what calls he made, and what he did. But Giles could give no information that was available.

In short—from what he could gather from Giles and others, there was no one whatever in or about Foxwood, then or in time past, that at all answered to Philip Salter. He heard Mr. Smith spoken of—"Smith the agent, an old friend of the Andinnian family"—but it did not once occur to him to attempt to identify him with the criminal. Smith the agent (whom by the way Mr. Strange had not chanced yet to see) was living openly in the place, going about amid the tenants on the estate, appearing at church, altogether transacting his business and pursuing his course without concealment : that is not how Salter would have dared to live, and the detective did not give Smith a suspicious thought. No : wherever Salter might be he was evidently in strict concealment : and it must be Mr. Strange's business to hunt him out of it.

In the meantime, no speculation whatever had been aroused in the village as to Mr. Strange himself. He had taken care to account for his stay there at the first onset, and people's minds were at rest. The gentleman in delicate health was free to come and go ; his appearance in the street, or roads, or fields, excited no more conjecture or observation than did that of the oldest inhabitant. The Reverend Mr. Cattacomb was stared at whenever he appeared in consequence of the proceedings at St. Jerome's : Mr. Strange passed along in peace.

Still, he learnt nothing. Sir Karl and Lady Andinnian had returned home long and long ago ; he often saw them out, together or separately as might be, Sir Karl sometimes driving her in a beautiful little pony-chaise : but he could learn no trace of the man he was after. And whether he might not have thrown up the game in a short time for utter lack of scent, cannot be told. A clue—or what he thought was a clue—arose at last.

It arose, too, out of a slight misfortune that happened to himself. Entering the house one evening at dusk before the passage lamp was lighted, he chanced to put his foot into a tray of wine-glasses, that the young maid had incautiously placed on the floor outside the parlour-door. In trying to dart back and save the glasses, Mr. Strange slipped, went down with his right hand upon the tray, broke a glass or two, and cut his hand in three or four places. Miss Blake was there at the time, helping to catechise some young children : she felt really sorry for the mishap, and kindly went upstairs to the drawing-room to see its extent. The hand was in a bowl of warm water, and Mrs Jinks was searching for linen to bind it up.

"Why do you put it into water, Mr. Strange ?" she asked. "I will make it bleed all the more."

"Some bits of glass may have got in," he replied.

"Will you have Mr. Moore?"

But he laughed at the notion of sending for a doctor to cut fingers, and he bound up the hand himself, saying it would be all right. The next day, in the afternoon, Miss Blake made her appearance in his room to inquire how the damage was progressing, and found Mrs. Jinks in the act of assisting him to dress it with some precious ointment that she vowed was better than gold, and would not fail to heal the cuts in a day or two.

Miss Blake had previously a speaking acquaintanceship with Mr. Strange, having often met him going in and out. She sat down; and the three were chatting amicably when they were pounced in upon by little Mrs. Chaffen. Happening to call in to see her cousin, and hearing from the maid downstairs what Mrs. Jinks was then engaged upon—dressing the gentleman's hand—the nurse ran up to offer her more experienced services.

She took the hand out of Mrs. Jinks's into her own, and dressed it and bound it up as well as Mr. Moore himself could have done. It was nearly over when, by a curious coincidence—curious, considering what was to come of it—the conversation turned upon *ghosts*. Upon ghosts, of all things in the world! Some noise had been heard in the house the previous night by all the inmates—which noise had not been in any way accounted for. It was like the falling down of a piece of heavy furniture. It had awoke Mr. Cattacomb; it had awoke Mrs. Jinks; it had startled Mr. Strange, who was not asleep. The history of this was being given to Miss Blake, Mr. Strange gravely asserting it could have been nothing but a ghost—and that set Mrs. Chaffen on. She proceeded to tell them with real gravity, not assumed, that she did believe a ghost, in the shape of a gentleman in dinner dress, haunted the Maze: or else that her eyes were taking to see visions.

It should be mentioned that after a week's attendance on Mrs. Grey, Nurse Chaffen had been discharged. The patient was then going on quite well: and, as Mr. Moore saw that it worried her to have the nurse there—for whom she seemed to have conceived an insurmountable dislike—he took her away. The summary dismissal did not please the nurse: and she revenged herself by reporting that the Maze had got a ghost in it. As a rule, people laughed at her and thought no more about it: this afternoon her tale was to bear different fruit.

She told it consecutively. How she had been quite flurried by being called out by Dr. Moore all on a sudden; how he had taken her straight off to the Maze without saying where it was she was going till she got to the gate; how she and the doctor had seen the gentleman at the top of the stairs (which she took it to be the sick lady's husband) and watched him vanish into an end room, and had never seen the least sign of him afterwards; how the servant, Mrs. Hopley, had vowed

through thick and thin that no gentleman was, or had been, or could have been in the house, unbeknown to her and Hopley.

Nurse Chaffen talked away to her heart's content, enlarging upon points of her story. Not one of them interrupted her: not one but would have listened with interest had she run on until midnight. Mrs. Jinks from her love of marvellous tales; the detective because he believed this might be the clue he wanted to Philip Salter; and Miss Blake in her resentful condemnation of Sir Karl Andinnian. For, that the "gentleman in dinner dress" was no other than Sir Karl, who had stolen in on one of his secret visits, she could have staked her life upon.

"A tall gentleman with dark hair, you say it looked like?" questioned Mr. Strange indifferently.

"Tall for certain, sir. As to his hair, I don't know; it might have been darkish. I see he had nice white teeth."

"Salter had good teeth," was the mental comment of the detective. "*I have found him.*"

"And in dinner dress?" added Miss Blake with a cough.

"So it looked like, ma'am. The sort of coat that gentlefolks wears."

"And you mean to say you never see him after; never but that there one time?" interposed Widow Jinks.

"Never at all. The rooms was all open to daylight while I was there, but he wasn't in never a one of 'em."

"Then I tell you what, Betsey Chaffen; it was a ghost, and you need not hesitate to say it."

"Well, you see he didn't look like a ghost, but like an ordinary gentleman," confessed Mrs. Chaffen. "What came over me was, Ann Hopley's standing it out that neither ghost nor gentleman was there: she said she'd take her oath to it."

"Thank you, you've done my hand up beautifully, Mrs. Chaffen. I should give my credence to the ghost theory. Did Mr. Moore see the appearance of this gentleman?"

"Yes he did, sir. I'm sure he did. For he listed his head like at the gentleman, and stood still when he got to the top of the stairs, staring at the room he had vanished into. I told him a day or two afterwards that Mrs. Hopley denied that any one had been there, and the doctor quietly said, 'Then we must have been mistaken.' I did not like to ask whether he thought it was a ghost."

"Oh I think you may depend upon the ghost," returned Mr. Strange, biting his laughing lip.

"Well, sir, queer stories was told of that Maze house in the late tenant's time. My cousin Jinks here knows that well enough."

"It was haunted by more than one ghost then, if all folks told true," assented Mrs. Jinks. "Mr. Throckton's son—a wild young blade he was—hung hisself there. I was but a girl at the time."

"Ah, one of the old ghosts come back again; not been laid yet," solemnly remarked the detective, staring at Mrs. Chaffen. "Did the lady herself seem alarmed?"

"Well, sir, I can't say she did then, because she couldn't have seen it and was too ill. But she had got a curious manner with her."

"Curious?" questioned Mr. Strange.

"Yes, sir, curious. As if she was always frightened. When everything was as still as still could be, she'd seem to be listening like, as though expecting to hear something. Now and then she'd start up in bed in a fright, and cry out What was that?—when there had been no noise at all."

"Feverish fancies," quietly remarked Mr. Strange, with a cough.

By and by, the party separated. As Nurse Chaffen was descending to the kitchen, leaving Mrs. Jinks putting the room to rights, Miss Blake, who had gone down first, put forth her hand and drew the nurse into Mr. Cattacomb's parlour; that reverend man being absent on some of his pastoral calls.

"I have been *so much* interested in this that you have been telling us, nurse," she breathed. "It seems quite to have taken hold of me. What was the gentleman like? Did he resemble any one you know—Sir Karl Andinnian, for instance?"

"Why, ma'am, how can I tell who he resembled?—I didn't get enough look at him for that," was the answer. "I saw his head and his tails—leastways the back tails of his coat when he turned—and all. Except his teeth: I did see them."

"And they were white teeth—good teeth?"

"Oh beauties. White and even as a die."

"Sir Karl's teeth are white and even," nodded Miss Blake to herself. "Had Mrs. Grey any visitors while you were there, nurse?"

"Never a one. Never a soul came inside the gates, good or bad, but the doctor. I don't fancy the lady has made friends in the place at all, ma'am. She likes to keep herself to herself, Ann Hopley thinks, while Mr. Grey's away."

"Oh naturally," said Miss Blake. And she dismissed the woman.

The Widow Jinks had a surprise that night. Mr. Strange, hitherto so quiet and well conducted, asked for the latch-key! She could not forbear a caution as she gave it him: not to stay out too late on account of his health. He laughed pleasantly in answer; saying he expected a friend down by the last train from London, and might stay out late with him.

But he never went near the station, and he met no friend. Keeping as much in the shades of night as the very bright moon allowed him to do, Mr. Strange arrived by a roundabout way at the gate of the Maze, and let himself in with a master-key.

"The dolt I was, never to have suspected this shut-in place before!"

he exclaimed. "Salter is lying here in concealment: there can be no doubt of it: and if his career's at an end he may thank his own folly in having allowed himself to be seen by the woman Chaffen. Wonder who the sick lady is? Perhaps his wife: perhaps not. And now—how to get through this maze that they talk of? Knowing something of mazes, I daresay I shall accomplish it without trouble."

And he did. His keen intelligence, sharpened no doubt by experience, enabled him to hit upon the clue. He got through the maze; he regarded the house from all points; he penetrated to the outer path or circle, and went round and round it: he made, so to say, the outer premises his own. Then he went through the maze to the house again.

It lay quietly steeped in the moonlight. He stood back over the lawn against the laurel trees that were beyond the flower beds, and gazed at it. In one of the rooms a night-light was burning faintly, and he fancied he could hear the continuous wail of an infant. To make sure whether it was so, or not—though in truth it mattered not to him, and was a very probable thing to happen—he stood forward a little on the lawn: but as that brought him into the moonlight, he retreated into the shade again. Most of the windows had blinds or curtains drawn before them; the only one that had none was the casement over the portico. Mr. Strange stood there as if rooted to the spot, making his silent observations.

"Yes; that's where my gentleman is lying concealed, safe enough! Safe enough as *he* thinks. There may be some difficulty in as safely unearthing him. He'd not dare to be here without facilities for guarding against surprise and for getting away on the first sound of the alarm bugle. This is a queer old house: there may be all kinds of hiding places in it. I must go to work cautiously, and it may be a long job."

The moon was beginning to wane when the detective officer with his false key got out again; and he thought he had his work tolerably well cut out to his hand.

The faint wailing had not been fancy. For the first week or two of the child's life it had seemed to thrive well, small though it was; but, after that, it began to be a little delicate, and would sometimes wail as though in pain. On this night the child—who slept with its mother—woke up and began its wail. Ann Hopley, whom the slightest noise awoke, hearing that her mistress did not seem to be able to sooth it, left her own bed to try and do so. Presently, in going to fetch some medicine, she had to pass the casement window in the passage; the one that was uncurtained. The exceeding beauty of the night struck her, and she paused to look out upon it, the old black shawl she had thrown on being drawn closely round her. The grass shone in the moonlight; some of the leaves of the laurels flickered white in its rays. At that self-same moment, as the woman looked, some movement directed her

attention to these very laurels : and to her utter horror she saw a man standing there, apparently watching the house.

The sickness of intense fear seized upon her as she drew aside—but the black shawl and the small diamond panes of the casement window had prevented her from being observed. Her first impulse was to rush on through the passages and arouse Sir Adam Andinnian. Her second impulse was to wait and watch. She remembered her master's most dangerous fiery temperament, and the pistols he kept always loaded. This intruding man might be but some wretched night marauder, who had stolen in after the fruit. Watching there, she saw him presently go round in the direction of the fruit-trees, and concluded that her surmise was correct.

So she held her tongue to her master and mistress. The latter she would not alarm ; the former she dared not, lest another night he should take up his stand at the window, pistol in hand. Two things puzzled her the next morning : the one was, how the man could have got in ; the other, that neither fruit nor flowers seemed to have been taken.

That same day, upon going to the gate to answer a ring, she found herself confronted by a strange gentleman, who said he had called, hearing the house was to let, and wishing to look at it. Ann Hopley thought this rather strange. She assured him it was a mistake : that the house was not to let ; that Mrs. Grey had no intention of leaving. When he rather pressed to go in and just look at the house, "in case it should be to be let later," she persisted in denying him admittance, urging her mistress's present sick state as a reason for keeping out all visitors.

"Is Mr. Grey still at home?" then asked the applicant.

"Mr. Grey has not been at home," replied Ann Hopley. "My mistress is alone."

"Oh, indeed ! Not been here at all ?"

"No, sir. I don't know how soon he may be coming. He is abroad on his travels."

"What gentleman is it, then, who has been staying here lately ?"

Ann Hopley felt inwardly all of a twitter. Outwardly she was quietly self-possessed.

"No gentleman has been here at all, sir. You must be mistaking the house for some other one, I think. This is the Maze."

"A lady and gentleman and two servants, I understand, are living here."

"It is quite a mistake, sir. My mistress and us two servants live here—me and my husband—but that's all. Mr. Grey has not been here since we came to the place."

"Now that's a disappointment to me," cried the stranger. "I have lost sight of a friend of mine, named Grey, for the past year or two, and was hoping I might find him here. You are sure you don't know when Mr. Grey may be expected ?"

"Quite sure, sir. My mistress does not know, herself."

The stranger stepped back from the gate to take his departure. In manner he was a very pleasant man, and his questions had been put with easy courtesy.

"And you are equally sure the house is not about to be vacated?"

"I feel sure of this, that if Mrs. Grey had thoughts of vacating it, she would have informed me. But in regard to any point connected with the house, sir, you had better apply to the landlord, Sir Karl Andinnian."

"Thank you; yes, that may be the best plan. Good morning," he added, taking off his hat with something of French civility.

"Don't think she is to be bribed," thought he as he walked away. "At least not easily. Perhaps I may in time work my way on to it."

Ann Hopley, locking the gate with double strength—at least, in imagination—pushed through the maze without well knowing whether she was on her head or her heels, so entirely had terror over-taken her. In the height and shape of this man, who had been thus questioning her, she fancied she traced a resemblance to the one who was watching the house in the night. What if they were the same?

"The end is coming!" she murmured, clasping her faithful hands. "As sure as my poor master is alive, the end is coming."

Not to her master or his wife, but to Karl Andinnian did she impart this. It happened that Karl went over to the Maze that evening. Ann Hopley followed him out when he departed, and told him of it amidst the trees.

It startled him in a more painful degree even than it had startled her: for, oh, what were her interests in the matter as compared to his?

"Inside the grounds!—watching the house at night!" he repeated with a gasp.

"Indeed, indeed he was, sir! But I hoped it was only some thief who had come after the fruit: I thought he might have got over from the fields by means of a high ladder. That would have been nothing. But if this is the same man, it means mischief."

What was there to do? What could he do? Karl Andinnian went out, the question beating itself into his brain. Why, there seemed nothing for it but to wait and watch. He took off his hat and raised his bare head aloft to the summer sky, in which some stars were twinkling, wishing he was there, in that blessed heaven above where no pain can come. What with one tribulation and another, earth was growing for him a hard resting-place.

(*To be continued.*)

DOWN CHANNEL.

A NOBLE ship was leaving the Shadwell Basin, where she had been for the past day or two taking in the remainder of her cargo. She was bound for Melbourne; that new land, comparatively speaking, of strength and enterprise; destined, perchance, at no very remote period, to take her standing high in the foremost nations of the world.

It was a brilliant morning: the first of June, and the celebration of the Queen's birthday. Queen's weather followed as an inevitable consequence. The docks and the river and the ships were decked out in holiday attire: the scene bore on the face of it a gay and festive appearance. To a landsman, accustomed for the most part to the atmosphere of bricks and mortar—nothing but the sky overhead to relieve the prospect—it struck home to the eye and the imagination with the dreamy unreality of a page out of the "Arabian Nights," or a long look into one of Turner's inimitable water colours. The bells of the surrounding churches were clashing out their loyalty to the sovereign: linking the air with sweet sounds that rose and fell in waves and cadences. The very breeze floating by vibrated upon the ear, until fancy caught the tremulous motion as it passed into the eternity of space. Nothing in creation is lost, says wisdom; and so it is a matter for wonder into what melodies these sounds form themselves when they have travelled millions of miles away from the earth. Perhaps into Oeolian, celestial music, such as the heart of man cannot, in this state of life, conceive.

Above, the sun was shining with the warmth of a June morning: wrapping the soul in a glow that lulled the senses into a forgetfulness of all the world and all time save the present scene and hour. The sky was not by any means cloudless, but it was chequered only by those white, fleecy vapours which serve to break the monotony of the matchless blue without concealing it; bringing out its deeper, intenser tints.

I was standing on the poop. The reader, if he happened to be looking on, would perceive at a glance that I am a landsman; perhaps would wonder what my business could be on this outward-bound vessel. My business was all pleasure. The solution to my good fortune was that I had a certain friend on board—J., who happened to be chief officer of the gallant ship. I was going out of London with him as far as it was possible and expedient: perhaps to Gravesend; perhaps to Deal; perhaps to the Isle of Wight. The exact distance depended upon circumstances over which neither of us had absolute control.

J. came up on the poop just as the ship was passing through the locks out of the basin. "All these signs of rejoicing," I said, "may

be taken as a good omen. You are beginning the voyage well, amico. Let us hope it will be well all through."

"Ay! Ay!" returned J., his mind perhaps reverting to the marvels and perils of the deep: and to the Hand that controls them. "Let us hope so. C., here's to our next merry meeting."

And he quaffed an imaginary goblet filled with—well, we may as well say ambrosial nectar.

Before the draught was swallowed, he was called to the other end of the ship, to look into something that seemed to be going crooked, and required the superintendence of a head to straighten. I remained on the poop. The ship was now well away from the lock and round in the river, a couple of satellites in attendance in the shape of tugs: one before her, one at the side. Never surely had there been seen so many flags flying: the ships, each of them, appeared to have strained a point to bring out one more than they possessed. Slowly and majestically she moved, passing one familiar point after another—behind, in the distance, the Custom-house and the Tower—until presently was reached Blackwall. Here she took on fresh cargo in the shape of crew, and some of the third-class passengers.

The ship this voyage was carrying neither first nor second class passengers: only a dozen or fifteen Welsh miners, two of them with wives and a flabby infant apiece. At Blackwall such as were not already on board came tumbling in, miners and crew; stupidly, insanely intoxicated: and so far they were worthy only the name of cargo, being in sober estimation even some degrees below it.

As we left Blackwall a tremendous cheer from a large crowd on shore, sent the good ship speeding on her way. The captain had just landed, and would rejoin at Gravesend. Visions of pocket-handkerchiefs, struggling apparently to outnumber the flags, greeted us as the ship slowly and indifferently moved on. Small groups stood about in various attitudes: the pathetic, the bold, the staggering, the sentimental: and probably, once out of sight, the multitude would turn tail and seek in the cup of oblivion a remedy for all sorrows.

Now the ship was fairly off towards Gravesend. On board it was anything but a picture of still life. The vessel was not half ready for sea, and the men for the most part were utterly incapable of making her so. Two-thirds of them had turned in, and were lying down in such heavy, senseless sleep as little else but strong drink will give. The first officer, who in this stage of the voyage was Commander-in-chief, was going about with all the nerves and all the temper he could muster brought out in his face.

"I can get nothing done," said he, leaping for a moment on to the poop to give vent to his indignation. "There's no one to do it. The men are all drunk and incapable, and the ship to look at is a disgrace." And then he launched into half a dozen nautical explanations that the

reader would scarcely understand without the presence of the ship itself to point the illustrations.

At this moment one of the Welsh miners—who were in the stage of intoxication that may be termed silly, just able to reel about—climbed the side of the vessel, and threatened to fall overboard. A rush forward and he was rescued with one leg and a head looking into the water. Before reaching Gravesend half a dozen of them had to be locked up, the most refractory one of the set narrowly escaping the irons.

Between Shadwell and Blackwall this man had been staggering about the main deck with a bottle of rum clasped to his breast in a melodramatic sort of way, as a woman on the stage clasps a baby about to be torn from her. "Coming events cast their shadows before." Just as the cork was on the point of being drawn, or the neck broken, the incident fell under the captain's eye, and the bottle was safely locked up and saved from ruin. The man began to whine, and to beg for it back again, but the captain's landing at Blackwall put an end to the matter.

For emergencies far greater than these is a captain's authority often needed. His life on board is full of experiences; and many an interesting book might come forth from the records of the ocean if facts and adventures were but jotted down as they occur: for now he has to command, now to marry, now to baptize, and now to turn doctor: combining in one person nearly all the learned professions. For a moment we will ask the reader to dismiss from his mind the present voyage, and to go back with us in time and imagination to the previous one taken by the good ship.

In that voyage she was carrying out four hundred emigrants, searching for fame and fortune in a new land. As, of necessity, she carried a doctor the captain found himself not called upon to administer the healing art. Neither were any marriages solemnized. But several new arrivals occurred during the voyage, and it followed as a matter of course that a day came when the christenings had to take place. Without gown and bell, but possibly with book and candle, the captain attended as priest; godfathers and godmothers, and all interested passengers, assisting at the ceremony.

The first baby was handed over, and the captain took it; rather awkwardly perhaps, but without letting it slip through his fingers. The service proceeded, and when it came to sprinkling the face of the infant, there was a pause. The face couldn't be found.

"Who has bundled up the child in this fashion?" he cried. "Where has the face got to? I don't believe it has one. Find me the face, somebody!"

It was about time. The unfortunate atom was upside down, and in another moment would have died from suffocation.

Then came the second baby's turn. That one's face was to the fore

—right-side uppermost. The captain reached the conclusion of the ceremony with self-gratulation upon having accomplished it in a masterly manner, and handed the baby over.

"But, captaining, sir," protested the godmother, "you've forgot to give it a name. Leastways I never heard none."

The captain turned to the chief officer—who performed the part of clerk and acolyte, said the responses, and held the book—for a moment's consideration. J., between reverence for the ceremony and the absurdity of the situation, was rapidly killing himself with suppressed laughter.

"By Jove!" cried the captain, "the woman's right. So I have. Here you people, bring that baby back again."

The baby was brought back, and, in everybody's anxiety to see justice done to it, this time received half a dozen names too many.

And now to return to the present voyage. The ship had left Blackwall, and with the help of the interesting scenes connected with the miners, and the tug, we made progress. Greenwich was passed, and the hospital, and the Isle of Dogs; and twenty minutes to one found us at Gravesend. Here forty tons of gunpowder had to be taken on board: so the ship drifted down a little beyond Tilbury Fort, of ancient memory, and anchored opposite Shorndean: "one of the prettiest places in England," remarked the pilot; "and where I once spent one of the pleasantest days of my life."

As the time went on, this pilot, Captain L., turned out to be one of the jolliest of men: a whole storehouse of past experiences in his head, and an excellent memory to bring them out. A genial nature, with apparently lots of sympathy in his capacious heart; making friends with all the world, and ready to take the world into it. His recollections stretched over a goodly number of years. "When I was twenty-one," said he, in the course of conversation, "I was captain of a ship, and in less than five years from that I carried Her Majesty's commission in my pocket, and was in command of one of the finest men-of-war afloat."

Before long he seemed to take it for granted that as far as he went I must go too: and his destination was the Isle of Wight.

We were lying off Shorndean, the river flowing past. A barge came up with the gunpowder, packed in small barrels, each one of which by the application of a match would have rendered the ship something less than the baseless fabric of a vision. In due time the barrels were put out of sight, and the last of the cargo was stored. About seven o'clock the captain steamed down in the tug, and all immediately went below to tea. Then, about eight o'clock, one or two unlucky individuals who would have liked to go further but could not, bid farewell to friends on board, and were tugged back to Gravesend pier. The captain's brother, a friend of the latter, and myself, were bound at any rate for Deal.

The day had been splendid. No signs of any change of weather; none were anticipated. All turned in at night, prepared to hail a fine morrow.

There were thus four persons on board for whom, as it were, no sleeping accommodation had been prepared. The cabins that would have been fitted up had there been first-class passengers, were appropriated to other purposes. So, to cut the Gordian knot of a dilemma, J. gave up his berth to me, and filled the rest of his small cabin with a long-chair, which he occupied himself. As far as comfort is concerned, it is doubtful which of the two had the best of the bargain.

It was a free-and-easy and most jovial state of existence. But novelty, we all know, is generally pleasing: and whether, when habit and familiarity had robbed the gold of its lustre, it would have seemed equally bright and alluring is a problem that was not likely to be solved. It can only be said that I then felt as if I had left behind me all the cares and responsibilities of land, and entered an utterly new life: another world: wherein the one sole thought and purpose was enjoyment. J. too was full of self-commandation at having lured me into his service, and the delights of a trip down Channel. "It is so jolly and homelike to have you here, old fellow," said he. "Can't you make the matter more perfect by going with us all the way to Melbourne?"

The next morning I was aroused out of sleep by Adam, bearing aloft two cups of coffee. Adam is an Abyssinian, who was doomed to share the fate of the captives at the time of the war, and who gained his release and freedom with theirs.

It was not quite easy to understand this intrusion. Another hour's sleep would have been worth the best cup of coffee ever brewed. As J. roused up to swallow his, I asked him to interpret the early supply, for which no orders had been given over-night.

"Invariably the rule on board ship," was the answer. "At six o'clock every morning, a cup of coffee. Tea if you prefer it. Before you leave us, C., we are going to make a sailor of you, and this is one of the regulations you'll have to fall in with."

Resigning myself to the inevitable, I ungratefully swallowed the decoction, and bid farewell to sleep for the rest of the day. Leaning over to look out through the window it was a startling discovery to find that the weather had changed. A dull, leaden sky, from which all vestige of blue was extinguished: rain too; and evidently not much wind. I groaned audibly.

"Hallo!" cried J., "what's up? Sea-sick in the river, old fellow?"

"Worse, worse," I returned, too downhearted to resent the implied defamation. "Worse by a great deal. A change in the weather. Thick clouds, darkness, and rain."

J. jumped up, shook himself into shape, and went out to reconnoitre the enemy. In about ten minutes he reappeared.

"Well?"

"Not by any means well," said he. "We are on the move, but it's cold and rainy, and the wind has chopped to sou'west. I see no present prospect of amendment."

At nine o'clock, every one had assembled round the breakfast-table, a party of Grey-friars in all save cowl and sandal.

"Watchman, what of the day?" said I to the pilot, whose good-humoured, jovial countenance, full of life and animation, was worth its weight in gold on such an occasion.

"Well," he answered, in the rich tones of North Britain—rich and round when they *are* rich and round: "we must take it as it comes. It's a bit unsettled: a foul wind; a dull sky; a nice steady rain: but who knows what it may be a few hours hence?"

The nice steady rain was pattering against the skylight; the foul wind was coming in with a cold, damp, creeping kind of sensation. Had I worn chains they would have shaken certainly, but not in transport and rude harmony.

The party fell to upon the blessings before them, and, spite of all adverse circumstances, did justice to breakfast. It may be as well to remark here, with the topic before us, that landsmen under the impression that sailors fare hardly at sea may spare their compassion. Probably one half the world imagines the captain's and officers' fare during a voyage to be salt beef and potatoes one day, and potatoes and salt beef the next, by way of variety. Never was there a greater delusion. Few people on land in an ordinary way live better than the officers of a large and liberal vessel; or enjoy a fairer portion of the good things of this life.

Coffee at six. Breakfast at nine; a substantial, well appointed meal. Tiffin at twelve: cheese, butter, biscuits, and any beverage fancy led you to call for; dinner at four; a cup of tea at six; at eight, grog. Thus there was no danger of starving, or of finding the intervals between the meals of too long duration. One of the hardest tasks a man could set himself would be to take a voyage on board a liberal ship with the intention of doing "Banting."

One morning, four days from starting, we had rolls for breakfast: none better ever made or tasted. I thought they must have been brought on board at Shadwell; forgetting for the moment that bread, like many other things, ages with time.

"Where do these rolls come from?" I asked. "Who made them?"

"The carpenter," replied J., as grave as a judge. "It is the carpenter's duty to make bread on board ship."

"Thank you for nothing," I returned. "The cook, meanwhile, takes a turn at the saw, I suppose?"

"Peace, gentlemen," cried the pilot. "I maintain, Mr. R., that your friend here is fully justified in wondering how such bread found

its way on board. It is the best I ever had at sea. The cook deserves a gold medal : and if I had the giving of it he should have one."

But to go back again to Sunday morning.

As a rule Sunday on board ship is observed no less strictly than it is on shore. In the morning the captain reads the church prayers ; and for the remainder of the day as much rest and quiet is allowed to obtain as is practicable. But on this first Sunday there were too many rough things to be made smooth to permit of any special ceasing from labour. The men, yesterday helplessly intoxicated, had now to make up for lost time. The whole day they were hard at work, getting the vessel shipshape and ready for sea. Other changes for the better took place. The weather showed signs of breaking ; signs which gradually expanded and went on to perfection. The day, begun in tears, ended in sunshine.

For many hours little progress had been made ; and after the discharge of the tug, we had kept stationary for some time. The evening grew fine and bright, and about ten o'clock all turned in with the exhilarating prospect before them of a fine morning.

For once appearances were not deceptive. At six o'clock Adam came in with the twin cups of coffee, and the first question concerned the all-important topic.

"Very fine morning, sir," he replied, in his broken accent : and the good news changed the black draught into Imperial Tokay.

"To-day," remarked J., "I am going to set the watches. You'll have to keep mine with me. Therefore your work is cut out for the remainder of your journey. Four hours in and four out."

The bargain was signed and sealed, but on the whole was less faithfully observed.

The watches at sea are perhaps the hardest work of an officer's life. It would be difficult to forget J.'s expression the night that the second officer awakened him for his first watch. It was eight bells—midnight. In the first moment he stared up, somehow, with the look of a hunted animal ; a stag at bay ; what the French would call *effarouché* ; as if he could not make out what in the world was the matter : and at four o'clock, when the second officer came out of his cabin to take his turn until eight, streaks of red were about his eyes and down his cheeks ; as if he, too, had just recovered from a nightmare. In time, no doubt, they get accustomed to it ; but this broken rest must make havoc with a good many of them. I hinted as much to J.

"You are right," he answered. "It plays the very deuce with us. We don't feel the effects of it at my age, but it tells upon a man when he begins to go down-hill. This is one reason why you seldom see an old sailor. They get aged and dried up, and die before their time."

The watches are changed every four hours, save what are called the dog watches, from four to six and from six to eight in the evening.

By this break, the officer who, for instance, is on watch one night from twelve till four, will the next night be out from four till eight.

It must be monotonous often enough to be pacing the poop for four hours at a stretch on a dark night, with no other company than your own thoughts and an occasional pipe. Perhaps it is raining and blowing; perhaps it has been raining and blowing for many days and nights; but these ever-recurring watches must be kept, and, for the safety of the ship, with all vigilance. A sailor's life is not made up of sweets and pleasures—the strawberries-and-cream of existence. Little wonder that when on shore they go in for it, and enjoy it so thoroughly, and make the most of their time; concentrating, a good many of them, into one month, the pleasures and amusements of a whole year.

Monday morning, it has been said, was clear and fine. Instead of indulging in sleep until nine o'clock, I turned out with J. about seven, and went up on the poop. The air, fresh and wonderful, threw life into the lungs, and was worth a king's ransom. The sun was already far above the horizon, and its beams played and glittered upon the happy waters. They were growing wider, these waters, and the mind seemed to expand with them. The pilot greeted us with a heartiness peculiar to him.

"Now isn't this fine!" said he. "Isn't it grand! Have you anything on shore like it? Will London, with all its stores of art and treasure, yield one moment of delight so pure? Don't you feel life and health springing up within you? fresh strength with each new morning?"

We assented to all. It would indeed be difficult to describe my own feelings with accuracy. Every now and then I had to pull myself up, as one awaking out of a dream, compelled to wonder whether all around was in truth reality. The motion of the vessel lulled me into a kind of passive, laisser-aller existence, where the only thing to be done was to enjoy life and let things take their course. A course pleasant beyond description: belonging not to men, depending not upon them, but upon the government of an enchanted world.

There was no staying below to-day; such wind and sky and sea should not be wasted on the desert air. As soon as breakfast was over every one went up again; some to smoke, some to read, some to lounge or pace the poop. There was the coast to be seen. As the ship went on, Margate hove in sight, perched up on its high white cliffs. With a glass every house could be plainly made out; and even the people and the donkeys on the sands—though which was which could not always be discerned. In the distance, this side of the town, Quex Park reared its head. Adjoining it rose a clump of trees, enshrining a house hallowed to heart and memory. To the right lay the town; to the left the glorious expanse of sea, stretching far as the eye could reach. Here and there was a sea-gull, dipping its wings in the water, or riding

gracefully upon its surface, or skimming away far off towards the horizon.

Gradually we passed Kingsgate, and rounded the point at the North Foreland ; Ramsgate, looking high and hot in the sunshine ; Pegwell Bay, where, the reader will remember, landed St. Augustine and his band of monks : and then we were in the Downs.

At four o'clock the sky before us suddenly grew overcast, and a squall came on. The wind went crashing through the rigging. Behind was a bright, cloudless canopy ; ahead, in the distance, intense, blue darkness, which threw its shadow on the water as it crept up, and gave it a shuddering depth and cruelty and coldness. The ship rocked, and turned on her side, and strained before the storm. Everything was hurry and labour. One sail after another was taken in as by magic, and the men went up aloft to reef them, singing to their work with a weird note that seemed to chime in with the nature of the scene. The sky gradually grew blacker and blacker, and suddenly from out its darkest part a vivid flash of lightning shot forth, its forks taking much the form of a giant eagle's claw about to grip its prey. The thunder boomed out in dreadful majesty, crashing away seemingly far into the horizon. The vessel shook and shivered as though she understood that it was the echoing of a Voice more powerful than that of earth : a Voice to which all must bend in awe and silence. The wind was shrieking and blowing and whistling, apparently from all quarters at once : taking the sails before they were furled and lashing them with a noise like the prolonged report of musketry : tossing them as though they had been mere sheets in a storm. Then another flash came, and was succeeded by a rolling crash immediately overhead, that set you thrilling with the grandeur of the scene and sound. And then torrents of rain poured down, sweeping over deck and sea, and sparing nothing. Involuntarily, and it could not be otherwise, the words of the Psalmist passed through the mind.

They that go down to the sea in ships, and occupy their business in great waters : these men see the works of the Lord, and his wonders in the deep. For at his word the stormy wind ariseth, which lifteth up the waves thereof. They are carried up to the heaven and down again to the deep : their soul melteth away because of the trouble. They reel to and fro and stagger like a drunken man : and are at their wits' ends. So when they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, he delivereth them out of their distress.

There was no danger, and no very rough water ; but to one unfamiliar with the sights and scenes of sea-life it was grand and awe-awakening.

"And yet," said J., later on, "it was nothing; absolutely nothing,

compared with what we sometimes have. I should like to get you in mid-ocean, C., and show you a real storm; a rough sea. Not so much the billows mountains high that people talk about, as the long sweep of a wave, rushing and hissing and rolling towards you, as if it would swamp the little cockleshell of a ship on the surface of the water. And then the brave manner in which she rises out of the danger, and goes speeding on her way!—you little imagine what it is."

Any man indeed may long to witness such an awful sight; for it must give rise to thoughts and emotions, and perhaps to lessons that will pass away only with life itself.

The squall cleared, but the wind had changed and was again foul: so we came to an anchor. It must now be decided whether I would land at Deal with the captain's brother and his friend, or go on to the Isle of Wight. In the latter case I should remain the only guest left on board, and for a moment there rose up a terrible vision of being accidentally carried off to Melbourne. The matter was finally settled by Captain H. himself, as we sat that evening over the grog. J. was in his cabin writing the log.

"If you can spare the time, don't think of landing at Deal," said Captain H., in the most kind and hospitable manner. "By all means come on to the Isle of Wight. It is a chance that does not fall to the lot of every man, and you would do wrong to miss it. We shall be very glad to have you with us."

"What! harping upon that subject again!" cried the pilot, coming down at that moment—not after his grog, though, for he never touched anything stronger than tea and soda water. "I thought it was settled from the very first that you would go with me to the Island, Mr. W. Did I not say that I should be proud of your company? and agree to land you high and dry, and free of all trouble and cost? I tell you that if you basely reject that offer, and leave us in the lurch at Deal, you will be guilty of nothing short of a crime."

"All right," cried J., appearing at his cabin door. "I'm good for the chair for any number of nights. So that's settled."

"Very well," I replied resignedly. "Enter it in the log." And thus overwhelmed, I gave in to what was certainly inclination, and under the circumstances seemed to be duty also: and yielded to the enjoyment of the hour.

As night set in the weather was again stormy, and everybody bid everybody good night, with the rain pattering over the skylight. We were not far off Deal, and it was impossible to say how soon after day-break a boat might come alongside to carry off those bound for shore. At seven the next morning I turned out. Rain was falling in torrents. In the distance was Deal, comfortably wrapped in a haze; and in half an hour's time a small boat was seen struggling towards the great ship in answer to her signal. By eight o'clock she had come up, and the

two unfortunates bound for land—the captain's brother and his friend—got into her in the pouring rain, wrapped in oilskins.

I felt more than commonly glad that fate had decided to carry me on to the Isle of Wight. It would take not less than sixty or ninety minutes to reach Deal; and at that hour of the morning, in a small open craft, upon a not particularly calm sea, it was no light or pleasant matter to encounter.

About nine o'clock some one prophesied an approaching change for the better. Even at that moment a sunbeam broke through the clouds and kissed the sea; and in less than an hour it was as fine and glorious a morning as could be wished for.

"If this breeze continues," said the pilot, "we shall be at the Island to-night. How they will regret having landed at Deal."

The news gave rise to a pang of regret. The weather was so glorious; the sea so calm; the life on board of such a hazy, dolce far niente description that in place of a few days it would have been no hard or unpalatable task to put up with it for as many months. But the pilot had added a proviso; and the wind did *not* continue favourable. It dropped and becalmed us; and at night the ship was scarce nearer the Island than she had been in the morning.

After Deal began the pleasantest part of the trip. The coast was interesting and beautiful, and the pilot, for my especial benefit, ran the ship as close in shore as possible. Nothing could have proved more enchanting than the combination of earth, sea, and sky—all the grand objects of nature visible in one glance. The undulating coast, now rising, now falling; high and low, in and out, something like the waves that played around its base: now resisting them with its great white cliffs, and now seeming to woo them by running down in soft smooth verdure to the sand; while here and there cottages or clumps of trees diversified the scene. Presently the cliffs grew yet higher, and far up, between a break, was caught a momentary glimpse of Dover Castle. As we gradually rounded, Shakespear's Cliff stood out boldly, one of the finest points of the coast. The town itself basked calmly and lazily in the sunshine and the glare of its white houses. From the pier the steamers were sending forth trails of smoke, getting ready for Calais or Ostend. On the one hand rose the high cliffs, bare and barren at the top; on the other, the old castle, nobly crowning the summit: behind all, the heights stretched far away.

Between Dover and Folkestone there was very little beyond cliffs, rising and falling, but bold and noble in spite of their sameness. About half way between the towns, perched upon almost the highest pinnacle, stood Abbottscliff House, looking very much as if it were monarch of the waters. A conspicuous object, and, with the addition of a turret and strong light, would doubtless form a capital beacon to the sailor. What breezes must blow upon it from right across the seas!

what tonics of life-giving physic, supplied by nature herself!—more kindly remedies than all the herbs and roots that ever grew. It was a happy thought that took possession of the old cliff.

All that day, making slow progress, we had coast scenery to our right hand, to occupy the attention, and relieve the monotony of the wide wake of water. In many parts it had been more than beautiful. At Walmer, for instance, adjoining Deal, with its old castle resting amidst the trees, down near the shore; a handful of houses clustering together, and bringing to mind, why it was almost hard to tell, some of the villages in the mountains of the Tyrol.

As the evening went on, so did the fine weather: on to a glorious sunset. The wind had dropped to a dead calm, and the ship was lying off Beachy Head. As the sun neared the horizon, it flooded the west with a glow of gold so intense that it almost seemed possible to pierce beyond it into the radiance of another world. The ripples were studded with gems that flamed and sparkled in the sunlight. To the right a dark bank of clouds threw its shade upon the water, yielding a strange contrast: on the one side a bright, glowing sky of unutterable glory: on the other solemn depth and darkness: the one light, living, sparkling liquid, flashing and laughing from the land to the ship, and beyond again; the other, a sombre, deep, black-looking line of sea. What a picture it would have made! Such is the mysterious connection, the link, the kindred affinity, between sea and sky. All things are dependent upon each other. In nature, as in man, the eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of thee.”

Pacing the poop, we could only gaze in silence upon the setting sun. But J., who had grown familiar with such scenes, had seen the wonderful sunsets of the tropics, of which we in our own clime can form no conception, felt his enthusiasm far more subdued than mine: the latter possibly he thought a little exaggerated. A lingering sunbeam shot down upon the water. “And the sunbeam clasped the ocean, and the moonbeam kissed the sea.” Then the sun changed colour and turned red—the redness of blood or fire, bringing up thoughts of a far different nature. “The sun shall be turned into darkness and the moon into blood, before the great and terrible day of the Lord come.” It went out of sight below the horizon; and a light passed away from the sea and sky, and another day was gone. For the last quarter of an hour every moment, literally, had brought with it a change; a marked difference in tone and colour to the scene; and now the change to twilight was rapid, and so on to darkness. It had been a glorious day, full of an intense and peculiar happiness. Existence alone, the sensation of living and breathing and moving was pleasure great and all-sufficient; and can only be described in the one word—Life.

Soon after darkness we turned in. It was J.’s watch from twelve to four, and I was under bond to keep watch also: so it was well to get

some sleep beforehand. At midnight we were awakened by the second officer, and a few minutes later saw us pacing the poop together. A novelty and a new sensation to me, it seemed strangely pleasant to be patrolling up and down, in the darkness, looking out upon the lights of ships studded about here and there: keeping watch all round against danger: gazing up into the bright stars, which seemed twice as high in this clear atmosphere as they do on land. Once a green light was visible ahead, proving that a vessel was in the track to cross the bows of the ship. For some time she bore down, until she appeared almost close.

"How careless!" said J. "They are not keeping a proper lookout, and have not seen our lights."

Just then the red light flashed; and in less than no time a small schooner crossed our stern. These signals at sea, simple as they are, are a wonderful invention. There was something weird in passing the vessel so closely in the still, dark night; meeting so nearly in that great, almost unlimited expanse of waters. The very darkness excited the imagination, and rendered the scene to one unaccustomed to it excessively attractive. As the moments crept by quickly in conversation, and one hour gave place to another, a faint glimmer broke in the East, like a herald to trumpet in the birth of a new day. Gradually a light stole over the sea, so faint yet palpable, and so much on the surface, that it almost appeared possible to pick it up bodily. The glimmer expanded; the line in the horizon grew brighter and broader, and darkness crept away to her hiding place, from the face of the earth. The ship was not making much way: last night she was off Beachy Head; this morning she was little if any farther.

It was Wednesday, and still we were a good distance from the Isle of Wight. At breakfast I congratulated the pilot upon the long voyage he was making, whereby I was reaping the benefit of so much extra sea-air; so much additional delicious, genii-given existence.

"Treason!" he cried. "You had better not let the captain hear such a remark. His anxiety is to get away as quickly as possible, and you will be put down for an evil spirit in the ship."

"And like Jonah, perhaps be cast overboard," I returned. "Sooner than meet such a fate 'twere better to be silent. But to express sorrow is beyond my powers of dissembling. Is the wind fair?"

"Fair!" he shouted. "Foul as foul can be. A downright sou'wester."

"Any chance of reaching the Island to-day?"

The pilot looked across, a merry twinkle in his eye. "Not much," he said.

Wednesday passed much as the previous day, except that a strong wind was blowing dead ahead. The ship was compelled to tack, so that progress was made at the expense of about five times the length of

journey pursued in a straight line. When Wednesday night arrived we were by no means in sight of our destination.

The weather now showed signs of storm and anger. A cold wind was blowing, and the ship had more motion in her than was altogether necessary or agreeable. From eight to twelve I kept watch with J., the captain turning in at ten o'clock and leaving us in possession of the poop, and in the company of the pilot. The latter took it as easily as his duties permitted, reclining occasionally in an American chair. At midnight the second officer was called. Then we brewed some tea with the help of a portable kitchen left out upon the cabin table by the kindness and forethought of Captain H.; and the pilot came down for some supper—which was well needed to sustain him in his work through the long night.

It was beginning to rain as we turned in. Every hour was making it less promising. At four o'clock the second officer roused J. for his watch. To me it appeared as if we had but just fallen asleep, and, incapable of rousing up to fulfil my bargain, I turned round and dropped off again. Yet not before I had had time to pity J. from the bottom of my heart, and to tell him so. He, too, felt that a few hours' more sleep would have been no great hardship.

"I see you are wisely going to stop where you are," said he. "If you had attempted to move I was ready to strap you down. It is pouring with rain, and blowing well, and you would hardly stand the discomfort of the poop. I wish *I* hadn't to turn out, ami."

He wrapped himself in oilskins and a sou'wester, and went out—a most unfit object for a drawing-room.

Thursday morning. The rain coming down in torrents; the weather decidedly what sailors call dirty; the wind blowing; the ship anything but steady. Compelled to have what they called "puddings" on the table: bags of green baize stretching the whole length and lashed on, filled with sand or some heavy substance of the kind, to keep the plates and dishes from rolling off. There was no liveliness in the prospect.

"Are you *very* sorry to hear that we shall land to-day?" said the pilot across the table.

"Is that an undisputed fact?" I asked.

"Undoubtedly so. The moment a cutter comes alongside you may bid good-bye to your present quarters."

A matter for sorrow certainly. Yet the untoward state of the weather robbed the parting of some of its regret: capsizing as it did the dreamy, romantic emotions of the trip. It did not brighten as the morning advanced; but to remain below was not to be thought of. So borrowing an oilskin from Captain H., and sea boots and a sou'wester from J., I went up on the poop, flattering myself that I looked very much a son of Neptune. Alas! before pride comes a fall. It was easy enough to put on sea boots, but not so easy to put sea legs into

them. The decks were wet and slippery ; the ship was rolling ; it was impossible to keep a straight path. Several times I went flying and sprawling at full length, charming, of course, all beholders.

Time went on. It so happened—it was a rare occurrence—that no Pilot-cutter was anywhere about. Some distance off was an open boat—one of those famous deal boats that weather all seas and all winds. This we signalled, and she answered. Away to the left loomed the Isle of Wight, but at what point to land was a matter for after consideration. The rain was still beating down, and the prospect of a long sail in an open boat was not enlivening. I had not even a great coat with me, and the cold and wet very sensibly asserted their influence. Soon after two we were in our cabin—from which the long chair had finally and with groans been expelled—when Captain H. looked in.

"Your boat will be alongside in five minutes, Mr. W." And then followed a consultation as to how I should be rigged out.

In the upshot, I went ashore with very little of my own. J. had already supplied me with a full suit of clean linen ; the captain lent me a great coat ; J. volunteered to look after my hat during the voyage, and lent me a cap of his own in place, to which he added a comforter. Thus rigged, I bade them all farewell.

The lugger sent off a little rowing boat, into which we tumbled as gracefully as the sea would permit, and she shoved off. Three cheers greeted us, which were as heartily if less noisily responded to : and then we were clear of each other. We rolled into the deal boat, and the small one was hauled in. Each vessel went her way, the one outward bound, the other homeward. The big ship looked grand and noble on the waters, as we left her, and gradually got farther away. Long before we neared the island she had disappeared.

It was a curious circumstance that the moment we got into the lugger, the rain, which had been pouring down in torrents the whole morning, ceased ; and we had no more.

The first discussion between the pilot and the men was as to the nearest and most convenient place for landing. One wanted Shanklin, another Ventnor : and the choice in the end fell to the latter.

The motion of this small boat was something remarkable ; a change undoubtedly not for the better. Now up, now down, now right, now left ; now a kind of all round motion : heaving and rolling, pitching and tossing—and the Isle of Wight twenty-three miles distant. Still she made way with her sails, driving before the wind. The sea grew rougher, and the men laughed at me, as I sat there an object of compassion, half the time with closed eyes, too indifferently comfortable to utter a word : and beginning to think of the possibilities of the mal-de-mer. But the enemy was successfully resisted.

"These boats turns lots of 'em up," said the man at the helm.

"They can't stand the motion of 'em : not only passengers, but seamen and captains and all. Even coming off a long voyage, the moment they gets into one of these Here little boats, it's all up with them. How mortal savage some of 'em are, to be sure ! "

The more way she made, the further appeared the island. The pilot laughed at the remark.

"She's going quickly," he said. "The tide alone is carrying her at least five knots an hour. But I had no idea we should be so long landing. No chance of a train up to town to-night."

The weather had cleared. The clouds were fast rolling off : the sun westward was pouring a flood of light and warmth over the grateful water. It had been intensely cold : and never had borrowed coat done better service. As the boat approached the island all mist evaporated, and the evening was lovely as ever went to rest. In the distance the Needles stood out boldly to the sea. Nearer, was Freshwater Bay ; and beyond, St. Catherine's Point, towards which we were steering. From the water the island was seen at its best, and the men ran close in shore, at the pilot's request, that none of its beauty might escape observation. Here, too, the water was smooth, a blessing duly appreciated by at least one person on board. Brook Chine was passed, and half a dozen other chines, Brixton Bay, and Blackgang : all picturesque. The waters lapped the foot of the island, which in parts sloped up into hills green and fresh. Here and there houses were dotted about, lying perdu in the trees or standing out more boldly to the view. But it seemed a deserted island, or one in which the inhabitants had been charmed to sleep for a hundred years. For upwards of an hour we had been watching the land, admiring its position and beauties, exulting in the sudden change of weather, and no living person had crossed the line of sight.

"I couldn't live here," said the pilot, drawing a long breath. "I should go mad ; melancholy. It is Norfolk Island over again : worse, if anything."

Presently he gave a shout. "I declare I see smoke coming out of a chimney"—pointing to a small house on the edge of the cliff. "And —yes—it is actually, a real, live, female woman, as Paddy says, going in at the door."

So it was. We seized the glass to make sure of it, and almost fancied we heard the door slam behind her.

By and by we passed St. Catherine's lighthouse, looking pretty and pure enough to represent any saint in the calendar. No sooner was the point rounded than Ventnor hove in sight, sleeping calmly and peacefully, and withal lazily, in the hollow. Here, at last, was our landing place. Consulting a watch we found it was near seven o'clock, and we had left the ship at half-past two. It was after seven before we landed, so that the best part of five hours had been spent in the boat :

more than half that time certainly not in a state of bliss : but the latter portion had far more than made up for the former.

Thursday night, and we had not touched earth since the previous Saturday morning. It was a novel sensation, and I felt as if I belonged less to land than sea. It had been a strangely pleasant week, thanks to J.'s companionship, Captain H.'s kindness, the Pilot's fund of stories and vigorous life and jollity, the splendid weather, and the matchless, boundless, everchanging sea.

As I set foot on shore the last link fell to the ground ; the trip down Channel was of the past ; in place of the glories of sea and sky, the beauties of the coast, the dreamy health-giving existence, there was a vision of a return to the thoughts and cares and occupations of everyday life.

Whilst the good ship, let us hope, is ploughing bravely and nobly her way to a distant port.



THE LOST.

WHEN the stars in the quiet skies are bright,
 And the winds are murmuring low,
 Lost voices seem to haunt the night,
 And vanished forms my heart delight,
 That were buried long ago.
 They come to me in my lonely room,
 When my heart with its grief seems breaking,
 I know that they sleep in the quiet tomb,
 I know that the violets over them bloom,—
 But they pierce the darkness and banish the gloom,
 And calmmy heart's wild aching.
 In the tones of old my name they speak,
 And they soothe from my brow the pain ;
 I gaze in their eyes, so holy and meek,
 I feel their soft kisses, on lip and cheek—
 Then the dream is fled, and all vainly I seek
 To summon it back again.

PRÈSMER : A FRENCH STORY.

II.

CONSTERNATION was great in Prèsmer. The good barque "Louise" had gone down with all hands! The fate of the vessel alone would have excited commiseration, though it was unfortunately an event of too frequent occurrence to call for particular attention. But when it was also known that Monsieur Henri de l'Ombre had doubtless perished in her, the sympathy of the whole town was awakened. Every one felt as if they had lost a friend: none knew until now how much he had been liked and estimated. On the Saturday morning it was the sole topic of the market.

This market was the rendezvous for the ladies of the town: they met not only to purchase provisions for the following week, but to laugh and chatter with each other. It was a scene of gaiety and excitement such as can only be found in some of those old French towns. The market women, standing over their poultry or butter tubs, looked beautifully clean and picturesque in their snow-white caps and long gold ear-rings. Some of them wore filigree chains, too, of the same precious metal, over their red and yellow fichus, and looked as if the world prospered with them.

This morning the concourse was unusually quiet and grave. No laughter was heard, and the ladies for the most part spoke in hushed tones.

One tall, fine-looking old lady, with a bird of paradise feather in her bonnet, was bargaining with a butter woman. She was a Madame Calibran, and the most inveterate coquette in the town, in spite of her age.

"Forty sous the piece," said the woman. "Not a farthing less, Madame."

"Thirty-eight," returned Madame Calibran. "You are dearer than anybody else, Justine."

"Ah, no! Madame is mistaken. Forty sous, and no less. I should lose by the transaction."

"Very well," replied Madame Calibran. "In that case you may keep your butter." And she moved away.

"Allons! allons!" cried the woman, calling her back, fearing to lose a good customer. "Prenez, madame; take it at your own price. Ciel! what a hard life we poor women have of it."

Madame Calibran returned, passed over a five-franc piece and some small money, and her maid took up three rolls of butter.

"You are my first customer," said the woman, turning the silver and crossing herself; "may it bring me luck! Has Madame heard the

news about the 'Louise?'—and poor Monsieur de l'Ombre was of a surety in her."

"It is terrible," answered Madame Calibran. "I have been ready to cry ever since I came into the Place. His poor mother, and poor Mademoiselle de Balder!"

"It is a triste marché," said the woman. "We shall not sell half our provisions, it's my belief. Everybody's talking—nobody buying."

"As for that," replied Madame Calibran, "people must live. Whether we are in joy or sorrow the stomach has to be supported. I daresay you will not have a piece of butter left by twelve o'clock. Bonjour, Justine. Another time don't waste so much time in bargaining."

The faces of Madame de l'Ombre, Madame de Balder, and Louise were of course absent from the market-place. Louise we have seen stretched early that same morning on a bed of delirium. Marie, alarmed beyond measure, rushed off into Madame de Balder's chamber with the tidings. The latter was dressed and just going into the salle-à-manger. She hurried to her daughter, questioning Marie as to what had taken place.

Marie, in few words, told all. Their journey to the end of the pier in the middle of the night; their intense anxiety in watching for the ships in danger; and the wreck of the "Louise."

"How could you go, Marie?" asked Madame de Balder, stooping over her daughter, who was tossing restlessly on her pillow. "How could you be so wrong—so mad?"

"What could I do?" returned Marie, weeping, and wiping her eyes with her apron. "Mademoiselle commanded me to accompany her. She did not even give me a moment for thought. We were half way towards the port before my scattered senses collected themselves. Ah, Madame! do not be angry with me! If Mademoiselle dies I shall break my heart."

"Let us trust that it will not be as bad as that," said Madame de Balder. "But she is evidently very ill, Marie. You had better at once fetch Monsieur Matthéus. Bring him with you if possible."

Marie departed quick as lightning. Monsieur le docteur Matthéus, to give in full the inscription on his door-plate, was a small, dark, wiry man, with piercing black eyes, cheeks the colour of parchment, and a grey, rough-looking beard. His manner was abrupt and stern, but his heart was one great throb of kindness towards his fellow creatures. Louise de Balder, whom he knew as a friend—she had scarcely in her life needed a doctor—was one of his especial favourites. Marie was fortunate enough to find him at home.

"Mademoiselle Louise ill, delirious!" he cried. "Why have you not fetched me before? Has she quarrelled with Monsieur Henri?"

"Hélas! monsieur le docteur," cried Marie, "have you not heard?

Monsieur Henri is dead, drowned ; gone down in the 'Louise.' And the blow has killed Mademoiselle."

"Even now she may be dying," said the doctor, rising up in alarm. "And here we are chattering instead of working. Help we with my cloak and hat, Marie, and let us depart. You can tell me the history as we traverse the streets."

By the time they had reached the house, he knew pretty well the facts of the case ; and guessed what would meet him on his arrival, and what he should have to do.

He wrung Madame de Balder's hands as he entered the sick room, bade her be of good courage, as he saw her pale, anxious face ; and then advanced to the patient.

For a few moments he gazed at her in silence ; then he felt her pulse and put his hand upon her forehead. It was burning hot. The cool hand seemed for an instant to calm the unconscious girl. He shook his head.

"Is she in danger?" whispered madame.

"I trust not," he answered. "We must endeavour to check the malady before danger arises. But I must not conceal from you, dear lady, that she is very ill : requiring all our care and attention. Marie," he said, beckoning the maid, who stood in the doorway to hear the opinion, "run with this to Monsieur Demol's the chemist, and come back with it as quickly as possible."

He scribbled hastily a few directions upon a leaf of his pocket-book, tore it out, and gave it to Marie, who lost no time in obeying his orders.

"Mademoiselle Louise has had a great shock," he said, turning to Madame. "If we cannot arrest this malady it will be the commencement of brain fever. What terrible news about poor Henri de l'Ombre !"

Madame wrung her hands. At the mention of the name, Louise started up on her pillow, her eyes fixed on vacancy.

"Who says Henri is dead?" she cried. "Who says that I saw him drowned with my own eyes, in the dead of night? It is not true! He is living, but they are keeping him away from me. Oh, Henri! Henri!" she wailed, sinking back, "come to me! forgive me! I will never grieve you again! I am dying, Henri; my head is on fire; come and see me!"

The doctor dipped a handkerchief into cold water, folded it, and put it upon her forehead. It calmed her, and a few moments after Marie entered, a small bottle in her hand.

The doctor took it, poured its contents into a glass, and gave it to Louise.

"Drink, my child," he said, in that tone of command which even the unconscious sick seem so strangely to obey. Louise swallowed it

mechanically, and in less than half an hour she had sunk into a deep sleep.

"If she only sleeps long enough, the danger will have passed," said Doctor Matthéus. "She will awake to consciousness; but if she is roused, or rouses herself too soon, we shall have a long illness before us. Ah!" he cried, turning to the window, "what do I see there?"

He pointed to some plants which Louise was fond of having in her bedroom, and which she persisted in keeping there against all advice.

"Away with them!" said he. "They would poison a whole regiment. In a sick room they are death. That heliotrope of all things is pernicious. And now, dear lady," he added, "I will leave you for a time. Remember, no noise; not a sound in the house. If our patient should awake before my return—which I trust will not be—send for me immediately."

The weather to-day was calm and tranquil as it had yesterday been the reverse. Only the sea remained rough and angry, as if not yet satisfied with the mischief and misery it had caused. It still dashed against the sides of the pier, with considerable abatement certainly, but with fury enough to be a still dangerous foe. But the wind had dropped to a lull; and so the ships coming in, tossed and tumbled about though they were, made the harbour easily enough.

That afternoon, as we have heard, a body was left high and dry upon the shore by the receding tide. The face had been battered by the rocks beyond all possible recognition. But in the pocket of the coat was found a case containing letters and memoranda sufficient to identify the body as that of Henri de l'Ombre. The news was carried to his mother.

She had of course heard of the wreck of the "Louise." They had broken the tidings to her in the morning as gently as possible, but she felt that she had received her death blow.

"You are quite sure it is the 'Louise' that is lost?" she asked, in the calm tones of despair.

"Quite sure, madame."

"What proof have you?"

They did not know. Upon further inquiry it was discovered that no one knew precisely whether it was or was not the "Louise" that had gone down. She was due, certainly, but there was a possibility that it was some other ship, after all, that had perished. No one could tell who had first spread the report as an undoubted fact. It seemed that there was still hope.

"It is cruel," said Madame de l'Ombre; "cruel to have thrown me into this state of suspense. It is enough to kill me or to turn my brain."

Then in the afternoon the body was washed ashore, and Madame de l'Ombre was told it was that of her son.

"This time you are certain?"

"Yes, madame. There cannot be a doubt. The face is not to be recognized, but the letters in the coat prove that it is Monsieur Henri."

She said she would not see him. She could not bear to do so in his disfigured state. She would rather think of him as she had last seen him in life. Were she to look at him now, the sight would never be out of her mind. A very short time and she should have joined him for ever where no disfigurement and no separation could take place.

Not a thought crossed Madame de l'Ombre as to the possibility of the drowned man not being her son. Every one told her that it was he who had perished, and that was quite enough for her. She did not question the fact; but accepted it with the calm resignation of a despair which could only give place to death itself.

And thus orders were given for the funeral, which was to be held on the Monday afternoon, and a grave was dug in the space left vacant for so many years by the side of the late Monsieur de l'Ombre.

And yet, the reader will easily have anticipated that the body washed on shore, and recognized as that of Monsieur de l'Ombre, was not his in reality; though had that been known to the people of Prèsmer, it would have made but little difference to their sympathy, or to the sorrow of the bereaved families. It would only have been presumed that Henri de l'Ombre, who was known to have sailed in the "Louise," had perished in her, and that his body had floated out to sea.

That it was the "Louise" which had been lost, the Sunday served to give yet more undisputed and undoubted fact. The tide brought up parts of the wreck. The sands were strewed with the débris; and on one long piece of wood the name "La Louise" was painted in the well known red letters. This was quite enough to set the matter at rest: there could be no more uncertainty or doubt. A rather singular circumstance was, that of the other bodies none came on shore, then or at any subsequent time. All had found a watery grave.

On the morning of the day that the "Louise" was to sail from Arronton, Monsieur de l'Ombre went down on board to see that the necessary preparations had been made for his comfort during the voyage. She was to clear off at three in the afternoon, and he undertook to join at two or half past. He had on a short pea-jacket over his coat, and found it so warm that he took it off and threw it in his berth, forgetting that it held a pocket handkerchief, and a case containing letters and memoranda.

It was a warm, bright day, and at two o'clock Monsieur de l'Ombre was strolling leisurely towards the boat, having settled all his business satisfactorily. He was accompanied by the gentleman whose affairs had principally brought him to Arronton, and was in high spirits, both with a sense of power at having achieved a difficult task with success,

and also that he was now on his road homeward ; that each day would bring him nearer Louise de Balder. Somehow he did not doubt that she would yield to him, and that their marriage would immediately take place.

They were going along, laughing and talking and looking about them, when their attention was suddenly attracted by a pair of restive horses attached to a carriage that was just turning the corner. They were plunging and kicking, and for a moment the coachman seemed to have lost all control over them. Two ladies were in the carriage, one old, with grey curls and a bright fresh colour ; the other young. Both seemed frightened, and the hand of the elder occupant was upon the handle of the door as if she was preparing to jump out.

The carriage came dashing on, and the two gentlemen instead of paying attention to their own path gave it all to the horses, getting themselves ready to assist in case of need. Monsieur de l'Ombre stepped upon one of those cellar doors that come out upon the pavement in certain old French towns, and which seem to have been invented by some enemy of mankind as traps for the unwary. The cave was only half closed, but this he did not notice, and in consequence fell through, down the stone steps.

"Take care, de l'Ombre," cried his friend, who saw the danger at the very moment it arose. "Take care ! The cave is open."

But the warning was too late. The horses went prancing on for a few yards more, and then became quiet : they had only been frightened by a mischievous boy letting off a pistol close to them : but de l'Ombre was at the bottom of the stone cellar steps unable to move. He had twisted his foot, and the pain was excruciating. He thought the ankle was broken.

With an exclamation as much of dismay as of pain he attempted to rise. But neither alone nor with the help of his friend could he do so. And in less than half an hour the "Louise" would start.

"What's to be done now?" cried Maltravers, looking down with consternation. "How will you manage to get on board the 'Louise,' in time?"

"I shall not manage it at all," said de l'Ombre, making a wry face as he endeavoured to ease the position of the foot. "Do you suppose that I am going to sail in that small craft, which carries no doctor, with a broken ankle?"

"Is it so bad as that?" returned Maltravers. "Then indeed you must not sail in her. I shall get my way after all, and keep you here another week or two. But what about your luggage? Is it not on board?"

"Ay ! I had forgotten all about it. Leave me here for a time, Maltravers, and send a messenger quickly for my portmanteau. Let it be taken back to my hotel."

"To my house, rather," returned Maltravers. "Hotels are not the places for invalids. You would have no one but that pretty chamber-maid to wait upon you, and I wouldn't answer for the consequences."

"For mercy's sake go and secure my luggage," cried de l'Ombre. "Every moment gives you less chance of saving it. What in the world should I do without clothes to wear?"

"No danger of that," returned Maltravers, who seemed more pleased to retain his friend than grieved for his misfortune. "The 'Louise' won't go without you if she had to wait till night. Of course, now that you *can't* go, she will start punctually enough."

He waited to say no more, but continued his way towards the harbour, and soon reached the "Louise." She was making preparations to start; everything bid well for a fair, prosperous journey. The wind was right, the sea calm, the sun bright, and the sky blue. No one not possessed of the gift of second sight or the spirit of prophecy could have foretold the disastrous end that was to overtake her. Maltravers, in noting all these fair signs, despite his pleasure at having his friend amongst them for a few days longer, could not help thinking that it was an unlucky accident that had put a stop to his embarking.

He explained the matter to the captain, who had been on the look out for his passenger, and had the portmanteau conveyed on shore and taken up to his house. But the pea-jacket that Monsieur de l'Ombre had thrown off that morning was overlooked, and remained on board.

It was now three o'clock, and the "Louise," being perfectly ready for sea, started. Maltravers watched her out of the harbour, wished her bon voyage in his heart, and turned back to look after Monsieur de l'Ombre.

He found him where he had left him, at the bottom of the cave steps, talking to the old woman who had just made her appearance from the depths of the interior. She gained her livelihood by selling yellow tablettes, a species of toffee much affected by French children of all classes. She had gone into her bedroom for a few minutes' repose; sleep had overtaken her; and, being deaf, she had heard nothing of the accident. Upon re-appearing, and finding her cave in possession of a child of larger growth than those who ordinarily paid her visits, she thought herself in for a wholesale order at least.

De l'Ombre had spent the time revolving matters in his own mind, debating with himself what course he should pursue in this dilemma, and he had just formed his plans when the old woman from the depths and Maltravers from the heights appeared almost simultaneously.

By pushing himself up backwards, one step at a time, de l'Ombre managed at last to attain to a level with the street. A fiacre was soon procured; and, to get him into it, with the support of Maltravers on the one side and the old woman on the other, was not found to be a very difficult matter. Ere long, de l'Ombre, helpless as a man chained

by the leg, found himself, in spite of faint opposition, comfortably installed in his friend's house, the object of solicitude and petits soins that he would scarcely have received at his hotel. A doctor was called in; and, after a careful examination of the foot and ankle, it was found that no fracture whatever had taken place. The fall had twisted the ankle violently, causing more excruciating pain perhaps than a fracture; but in a week's time, and with complete rest, the doctor thought the foot would be thoroughly restored.

"What shall you do now?" said Maltravers, as soon as they were alone together. "Write home, I suppose, all about your ill-luck, and tell them not to expect you until they see you."

"No," replied de l'Ombre. "Whilst I was lying in solitary state at the bottom of that cave, I turned matters over, and determined not to write."

"What then? what will Madame de l'Ombre say when the 'Louise' arrives without you?"

"She need not know it. The boat always keeps her time within an hour or two. She is due in eight days, and in eight days exactly I can make my appearance in Prèsmer. Meanwhile they will naturally think that I am on my way home in the 'Louise.'"

There was something in this decision that Maltravers did not altogether approve of. He could not tell exactly why, and it was rather an instinct than a defined idea. Had he understood all de l'Ombre's reasons for acting in this manner, perhaps the plan would have met with his approval. He knew nothing of the disagreement with Mademoiselle de Balder, though he was aware of the engagement.

"You see," said de l'Ombre, "if I write word to my mother that I have met with an accident and was unable to sail in the 'Louise,' her fears will immediately take alarm. She will be imagining all sorts of miseries, and perhaps rush off here to ascertain for herself whether I am quite or only half killed. Whereas, if she hears nothing, she will take it for granted I am on my road home."

Put in this way, it seemed a sensible course enough to adopt: and de l'Ombre kept to himself his thoughts about Louise de Balder.

We know how the event turned out. Could he have foreseen the wreck of the "Louise" and the trouble it brought, how differently he would have acted! And yet—perhaps it was all for the best.

A week passed, and Monsieur de l'Ombre was well again.

"Thanks to your care, mon ami," he said to Maltravers. "Had I taken my own will and gone back to the hotel, I should probably only have been half way to recovery."

"So that in this I have proved my own enemy," retorted Maltravers. "I, who wished to keep you here as long as possible, have been the means of getting you off before the time."

"Ill or well, I should have started to-day," said de l'Ombre. "The

'Louise' was due on Saturday night, I fancy, and my mother would get my letter this morning, warning her that I had not sailed in her, and that I should be home to-morrow. Travelling express all the way, I shall only reach Prèsmer to-morrow afternoon."

It was Sunday morning, and at two o'clock, de l'Ombre started. The past week's rest had done him a world of good, and he was in high spirits; laughing and talking, and enjoying life; whilst those at home were picturing him as disfigured and dead, and lying in preparation for his funeral.

As Monsieur de l'Ombre drew near Prèsmer on the Monday afternoon, he bought a local paper, and glancing his eye over it, his attention was arrested, and his breath also, by an account of the wreck of the "Louise." It stated that all hands had gone down, and lamented at some length the death of their fellow-townsman, Monsieur de l'Ombre.

His first thought was given to the narrow escape he had had. But for that accident he would undoubtedly have sailed in the vessel, and there was no reason to suppose that he, any more than any of the others, would have escaped death. He was alone in the carriage, or the emotion that swept over him, as he thought in gratitude of the merciful providence that had watched over him and saved him from this untimely fate, would have been an uncomfortable exhibition in the presence of others.

Then came the account of his own death, and of his having been washed on shore, and this he could not understand.

"Surely," he thought, "my mother would let it be known that it was not me; when she received my letter she would know that. What a happy thing that I wrote to her! what anguish they would all have been in by this time."

The paper concluded its paragraph concerning Monsieur de l'Ombre by announcing his interment for that day, Monday, at two o'clock. This was the most perplexing of all. His mother might by chance not have made known his escape: it was highly improbable, but it was at least possible: but it was impossible that his funeral could be arranged without her knowledge and sanction. How could it therefore be taking place in the face of his letter?

After turning the matter over in his mind, he could come but to one terrible conclusion: that the letter to his mother had miscarried. The thought turned him hot and cold; he started up and began pacing the carriage, as if that could bring him a moment sooner to his destination. The train, which was going at express speed, now seemed to crawl; so much slower was it than his impatience. His poor mother! what must she be suffering! it was enough to kill her. And Louise? how he wondered whether her present agony was bringing repentance with it.

It was three o'clock when he stepped on to the platform. "Why," thought he, "I shall have the chance of assisting at my own funeral.

I shall even not be able to avoid meeting it coming from the church."

Sure enough, as he turned the corner of the Place, it was advancing from the great church: his own priest, a family friend and confessor, the first in the procession. He was a very ugly man, but kind and good: now getting old. Henri when a boy had played him many a practical joke, which led generally to discovery and punishment.

Quick as lightning the thought now flashed over him of personating his own ghost.

He was dressed in a long travelling cloak; and, pushing his hat over his forehead, he put his cloak up to his face and concealed it beyond recognition. But no one was looking at him; all eyes were directed to the advancing cortége, and he had the pleasure of listening to various remarks of sympathy and condolence, in which he was intimately concerned.

The procession came slowly on. The priests were chanting; behind, the heavy coffin was being borne, covered with a black pall. All eyes were upon it: no one thought of looking at de l'Ombre. Just as his own priest came up, he moved a little in front, pushed back his hat, dropped his cloak, and fixed his eyes.

The curé was chanting with the others. He looked doleful enough for ten funerals, and felt as much grief as he expressed. Henri de l'Ombre from a boy upwards, spite of practical jokes, had been his prime favourite. His mind was at this moment full of him.

As he passed he happened to lift his eyes, and they fell upon the very man he was chanting over. De l'Ombre's face was pale, immovable; it was turned upon him. The curé gave a start, then another look. He believed firmly it was the spirit of his dead friend. His voice quavered, then died off in a kind of quiet bray; his mouth fell, and he dropped to the ground insensible.

In a moment de l'Ombre, who had not anticipated this climax, concealed his face again. People rushed forward to the poor curé: he was carried into a shop, and the procession continued its way towards the cemetery. Every one wondered what had taken the good curé, but he who had caused the commotion was on his road home.

Henri de l'Ombre scarcely knew how to make himself known to his mother. The grief of his death might kill her by degrees, but the shock of seeing him again alive and well, restored from the dead as it were, might kill her outright: he was by no means sure he had not killed the curé. Entering his porte-cochère in fear and trepidation, he stumbled up against Pierre, the man whom Madame and Mademoiselle de Balder had talked to at the end of the pier, and who was now off duty.

Ghosts do not usually half knock people down, but when Pierre had looked twice, he fell back with an exclamation of dismay. Undoubtedly he too thought it a spirit; but his nerves being stronger than those of the old priest, he was in no danger of following his example.

"Hush!" said Monsieur de l'Ombre, putting up his finger in warning. "Not a word! What are you afraid of, Pierre?"

It flashed dimly across Pierre's mind that he had heard that ghosts did not speak unless spoken to; in consequence he felt a little confused. At first he could not make out whether it was a spirit before him, or real flesh and blood.

"Is it you, Monsieur Henri?" he whispered hoarsely. "Have you come back to life after being so long in the depths of the sea? Has your patron saint performed a miracle? or are you only a spirit?"

"Pierre, your senses are wandering," said Monsieur de l'Ombre. "Here," he continued, "take my hand, and then ask me if I am alive or not."

The man held out his hand hesitatingly, and it was grasped with a force that set his mind at rest.

"I can't make it out for all that," Pierre said. "Every one in the 'Louise' was drowned."

"So should I have been," replied Monsieur de l'Ombre; "but I did not sail in her. I have just come home by train. I met with an accident just half an hour before the boat started, and had to stay behind to be nursed."

"Heaven be praised!" said Pierre, lifting his hands. "What a narrow escape you have had, Monsieur Henri! What will madame your mother do when she finds it out?"

"But what about your nephew, Pierre?" asked Monsieur de l'Ombre. "Is he saved?"

"Hélas, Monsieur, I tell you everybody was drowned. He has gone with the rest, and there is an end to all his mischief and wickedness. It is terrible."

"Terrible, indeed," replied de l'Ombre, realizing more than ever his own escape. "Pierre, I liked that lad. There was good in him. He would have turned out well in the end. His mischievous propensities were the result of youth and health: his heart was right enough."

"Possibly, monsieur; but no one knows the trouble he gave his family. Yet I wish we had him back again."

"Now, Pierre," said Monsieur de l'Ombre, "you are just the man I want. You must go upstairs to my mother and break the news of my safety to her. Do it gradually. Tell her there is a rumour that I was not drowned after all; and when she is sufficiently prepared, tell her the truth."

Pierre had his wits about him; and his rough common sense served him in as good stead as more refined tact. The task too, was a pleasant one. He was the bearer of good tidings: the happiest the poor mother upstairs had ever received. He waited no second bidding, but disappeared. In about ten minutes he came down again, his face glowing, his eyes bright with tears, his voice hushed.

"You can go up, now, Monsieur de l'Ombre. Madame knows you are saved. She is waiting for you in the salon."

Henri's patience had come to an end. In a moment he had entered the house, and the mother and son were clasped in each other's arms.

Louise slept for many hours under the influence of the doctor's draught. The house was kept perfectly still, and Madame de Balder sat at the bedside, keeping guard over the patient, and watching for the slightest change in her countenance. At twelve the doctor came for the second time, entering the room on tiptoe and making signs to Madame de Balder that all was going on well. At six he paid another visit. Louise still slept, and her mother was growing anxious at so protracted a slumber.

"Suppose she should never wake?" she whispered to him, as they were both gazing at her.

The doctor smiled.

"I hope I know my work better than to let her sleep her life away," he said. "This long sleep will probably save her from a dangerous attack of brain fever. See how much calmer she seems than she did at twelve o'clock."

It was quite true. At mid-day her face had been still flushed and heated, and there was a restlessness that her mother thought every moment threatened to wake her. But it did not; and towards three o'clock she gradually grew quieter. Now she was perfectly still; the heated face had given way to a slight flush; the head was cooler.

"She will wake at midnight," said the doctor. "You or Marie must sit up with her. She will be terribly thirsty no doubt, and we must make her some tisane. You need not be alarmed if you find her weak, prostrated both in mind and body. She has undergone a fearful shock; she will be some time recovering it."

"She never will recover it," replied madame, the tears filling her eyes. "Her hopes were all centred in Henri de l'Ombre; her best affections were given to him. I dread her awakening to consciousness."

"Youth has wonderful powers of reaction," returned the doctor. "It can survive, and even very comfortably get over, many things that would kill you and me. Still, it is a fearful misfortune; I cannot bear to think of it. Most of all, I pity that poor mother."

Later on in the evening they brought Madame de Balder news that the body of Monsieur de l'Ombre had been washed on shore; disfigured beyond recognition it is true, but his, beyond any doubt. This put an end to all uncertainty: and the poor lady felt that henceforth her child would have no one but herself to lean upon.

There rose up before her a vision of the future, as she sat there that

night, alone in the quiet of the sick room. A vision of herself, aged and grey, and then passed away from the earth : a vision of her child renouncing all worldly ties and ambitions, fulfilling her destiny quietly in the seclusion of some convent of strict order : perhaps that of Les Dames de la Visitation, where madame, until the last few years, had had a sister who was lady superior of one of its head establishments. And she wept hot tears of grief as she contemplated the change that a few hours had made in so many hearts and lives.

At midnight, as the doctor had prophesied, Louise woke. Prostrated and weak almost beyond the power of speech, but calm and rational.

She held out her hand to her mother and smiled, but did not speak at first. Madame de Balder clasped it eagerly and bent over it to conceal her emotion.

"Why am I here?" asked Louise after a time, in which she had been vainly endeavouring to collect her thoughts. "And why are you watching beside me, mamma?"

"You have been ill, chère enfant," replied her mother. "You have been very ill, and you must not talk."

"What has passed?" continued Louise. "My memory seems gone. I cannot collect my thoughts. There is the weight of some fearful trouble upon me, but what it is I know not. How long have I been lying here? A day, or a month, or a year?"

"Only one day, my Louise: only since this morning. You must not speak another word."

"Has Henri been to see me?"

Then, at the mention of his name, all that had lately occurred flashed over her memory, and, with a cry of despair, she turned her face to the wall. She was too weak to realize to the full all the terrible change in her life: but even now the shadow of an awful remorse fell upon her. *She* had been the cause of the journey that had proved his death.

They went on through the night; madame administering medicine and tisane according to the doctor's orders. At eight o'clock the next morning he arrived. Louise had fallen into a second sleep about six o'clock, and was now just awakened again, refreshed and strengthened in mind, but still weak in body.

"Come, come," said he, feeling her pulse and her head, "this is better than even I hoped for. We have conquered the enemy by prompt measures and a little plain common sense. Ah, dear lady," he added, turning to Madame de Balder, "if all the members of my profession would exercise more common sense, we should have less deaths in the world."

Louise was to remain in bed, a command she was far too weak to rebel against: and he ordered Madame de Balder to go and seek some rest, and Marie to take her place by the bedside. She looked, indeed, pale and careworn; and the doctor wisely told her that two invalids in

one household would not do at all. So she obeyed him, and went to find the repose her poor frame so much needed. Two hours after, had any one entered her room they would have seen her fast asleep, worn out with sorrow; and for the time unconscious of all cares and trouble.

The day wore on. At two o'clock the funeral was to take place. Madame de Balder, who was now up, dressed herself in black, and putting on a long, thick veil, quietly left the house, and made her way to the church.

No one noticed her. By herself, in a still corner, she took part in the funeral service, and when the procession had left the church she remained on for a long time alone, praying, according to the custom of her religion, for the soul of the departed. Then, when her tears had ceased to flow, though the eyes were red with weeping, she quietly left the church and made her way to Madame de l'Ombre, to see if she could by her presence impart some slight comfort and consolation to the bereaved mother. At least they could weep together.

The first thing that struck her when the door opened in answer to her summons was the countenance of the maid. It was radiant; brimful, as it seemed, of happiness. Madame de Balder felt a kind of shock pass through her: had the woman gone out of her mind?

She went into the passage, and the next thing that caught her attention was the tone of a man's voice; tones so like those of Henri de l'Ombre that she shuddered and turned sick. Then she heard a short, quiet laugh—such a laugh as no one but Henri ever gave—and, sinking into a chair in the *salle-à-manger*, she asked what it meant; whether she herself was mad, or whether the house was haunted.

"Madame must prepare herself for good news," said the maid. "There has been a mistake. Monsieur Henri was not drowned."

And this was all the preparation she had, for at that moment the door opened, and Henri himself entered the room; looking better than she had ever seen him. With a cry of pleasure as he caught sight of her, he threw his arms round her and kissed her, and then drew her into the salon to his mother.

Certainly the mothers wept together, but from how different a cause! All the explanation he had been giving to his mother had to be gone over again. He did not even omit the fright into which he had thrown the unhappy curé.

"Henri will have to do penance for that, depend upon it," said Madame de l'Ombre. "I only hope it will not prove the death of the poor old curé."

"But," said Madame de Balder, whose mind was utterly confused, "what is to be done? They are burying the wrong man."

"You mean that I ought to be in his place," said Henri, laughing. "Thank you. The poor man, you know, must have been buried in any case, so it does not much matter. And now I am going to Louise."

"Not for worlds," cried Madame de Balder, starting up in terror—"Henri, you would kill her. She is too weak to be told hastily all this good news."

He gave in, upon a promise that as soon as it was possible he should be allowed to come and see Louise and make his peace with her. He had heard all about her walk to the pier, and her being present at the time of the wreck; and felt as if he had something on his side to atone for, in having, unwittingly it is true, caused her so much anguish. But his heart beat joyfully with strong, quick pulses, as he felt how truly her life and happiness must be bound up in him.

Some months after this, a lady and gentleman might have been seen walking arm in arm through the old Pinacothek at Munich—the picture gallery of the old masters. The doors had only just opened, and for the present they had the rooms entirely to themselves.

Both were young and strikingly handsome, and it might have occurred to many a beholder that nothing hanging on the walls formed as fair a picture as did these two. They were evidently man and wife. On the face of the former was a look of proud happiness, which every now and then expanded to rapture, as he gazed down upon the beautiful girl beside him. Her expression was quiet and more subdued, though not less happy; and the face had scarcely yet recovered the effects of a recent trouble. But for beauty, no picture in the building could equal it.

"Let us sit down here, Louise," said Henri de l'Ombre, in the Rubens room; and they came to an anchor on a bench, opposite the entrance leading into one of the small side cabinets containing those gems of Van der Werff. Not a soul was there but themselves: the world of Munich did not trouble itself to contemplate art at that early hour; and it was not quite the season for tourists.

"There is always a want of rest about Rubens to me," said Louise, looking up at the glaring colours around them.

"There is no softness and repose in his work," replied de l'Ombre. "You must not seek for the hidden beauties of romance in him; his genius is quite of another order—dashing and glaring. But he is powerful, masterly, and grand in outline. He is wonderful."

Louise was looking at a painting of a shipwreck in the distance, wondering whose it was. It brought before her the realities of her past trouble, the contrast between her present happiness and the fate which had so nearly overtaken her. Her husband noticed the tears in her eyes; and following their gaze, guessed her thoughts.

"How nearly my fate!" he cried. "How close upon shipwreck was all our happiness! Louise, my wife, how much we have to be thankful for."

"Near shipwreck indeed!" murmured Louise with emotion, her eyes

still fixed on the picture. "And through me alone! But I trust, Henri, it has taught me one good lesson—to know myself; to subdue my will, which was rendering my character an odious one. Henceforth it is in your keeping; I have resigned all into your hands."

"So that even living in the same house with my mother does not now seem an intolerable burden to you?" said he, half smiling.

"Hush! don't remind me of those days of my folly and wickedness. As it is, they are ever present with me. Sometimes in the night I dream that I see you lying upon the beach, cold and dead, yet with eyes that look into mine with sorrowful pleading. And then I have to touch you, to make sure that it is a dream and not a reality. How little do I deserve my happiness!"

"Who indeed would be happy if thus judged?" returned de l'Ombre. "I think, Louise, we have both something to forgive. You might have died in that illness of which I was the cause, and then I should have wished that I had perished in the shipwreck. My darling, I think we are both the better for that past episode. Let its lesson remain with us through life."

They left the bench, and continued their walk through the rooms, quiet with a happiness accorded to very few in this world.



A NIGHT'S VIGILS.

I HAD been listening for half an hour to a strange yelping off towards the right, and could not make out the origin of the sound. Just then my surroundings were not strictly pleasing. I was bearing important documents from the ship just in to the commandant of the barracks near the most southern colony. Lieutenant Godfrey had started with despatches for the Colonial officers lying westerly of my destination—and for a certain length of time we had pleasantly journeyed together. We were not well pleased to part company; and we pursued our different routes alone with the certainty, or, rather, the liability of being set upon by bushrangers at any moment. To be sure, the section of country through which we should pass was sprinkled with shepherd's cots; but this class of people in that wild place were not always to be depended upon.

When the sun dipped westerly, I had got forward as rapidly as the state of the road would permit. Coming within the shade of the acacias and of the general evergreen forests, there was a rustling gloom surrounding me very dense and very nerve-trying.

Had our business been less urgent, one of us would certainly have turned off to accompany the other on the dangerous way; but it was imperative that the documents should be delivered as nearly as possible at the different places at the same time. They related to the removing of several out-posts and gangs to New South Wales, and there needed to be unison of action.

But that strange, echoing, solemn sound! Could it be the cries of the wild native dogs scouring about in quest of prey? It sounded more like the Van Dieman wolf. But we had been repeatedly assured that this animal was found nowhere but on Van Dieman's Island.

"Our paths run parallel for several miles," the lieutenant had said to me on parting; "and, should you find yourself in dangerous quarters, penetrate the bush if possible, and get near enough to signal me—and I will do the same." About an hour had elapsed since then.

While listening to these noises, every faculty I possessed on the alert, I was startled by what seemed to me like a wild shout coming from the direct course taken by my fellow-traveller. Immediately putting spurs to my horse, I made my best progress through the bush in the direction of the call. So sure was I that something terrible had happened to Lieutenant Godfrey, that I did not notice the scent of smoke perfuming the evening air in my near vicinity. So suddenly as to startle myself into a sort of palsy, I burst into a circular area, surrounded on all sides by gigantic ferns, and in the centre of which was a crackling fire, with

the preparations for an evening repast. The green circle seemed to be entirely free of human kind, and this singular fact no sooner made itself apparent, than a sense of deadly danger seized me, opening my eyes to the peril. I had unwittingly dashed into the rendezvous of some native ruffians, or haunt of the more formidable outlaws—escaped convicts. With a swift and rapid glance, I began backing my horse quickly. I dared not take the more expeditious method of crossing the area, for the country beyond might be simply a tangled wilderness, impracticable to the mounted traveller. As I wheeled about, a stalwart form leaped from a covert near by, and grasped my bridle. My horse, affrighted at first, reared bolt upright; the next moment he was vaulting clear over the crouching form, rushing like a tornado over all obstacles. He at length brought me back upon the direct route, along which we no more loitered, and an hour and a half's uninterrupted progress, at a racking pace, did the ten intervening miles, and brought us out to the station.

Here my business was soon concluded. But I waited, according to agreement, for Lieutenant Godfrey to join me there, so that we might return to Melbourne in company.

As the day wore on, my patience was exercised, and then my alarm. I communicated my fears to the commandant; and he was meditating on the expediency of sending a squad of soldiers off to look after my companion's safety, when the lieutenant came up safe and sound. His route had been longer than mine.

It was now late in the day, and after a brief interval of rest for him, we resolved to return; both having urgent desire to be at head-quarters with our report as speedily as possible. So we struck off in an easterly direction, after having refreshed ourselves with a supper of venison at the barracks.

"Now, then, look well to the priming of your pistols," said Godfrey, as we rode along, "for the outlaws are getting bold enough in the direction through which I passed this morning. They have attacked several shepherds, maiming some, and killing others; and have driven their flocks off to slaughter."

Then I related the sound I had heard the night previously, and the ambuscade I had nearly fallen into.

"As for the sound—shout, or whatever it was," remarked Godfrey, "I don't believe the night air of any other continent under heaven is checkered and badgered with such noises as find utterance in an Australian forest. There! They begin."

They did begin. What *were* the sounds? What was their meaning?

"I half wish we were not mounted, Godfrey. At the best, the horses make a great snapping of brush, and betray our progress."

"Be as silent as possible—with eye and ear alert," he answered. "It is a dangerous journey at best. And yet there is a pleasurable excitement about this life."

He was right. For one danger safely passed, it was forgotten ; and we were ready to enter upon a more perilous one.

"It were better, depend upon it," observed Godfrey, suddenly stopping his horse, "to swing off south of east, and get into the more open country. It will be the trifle of a few miles more of travel, but afford less secure ambush for the class of people that we fear."

With this we headed more to the right, and rode on as rapidly as possible, chiefly maintaining silence.

Nearly half of our journey had been safely passed over, when Godfrey, who was riding close to me, suddenly grasped my arm. "Do you see that?"

It was a light ; gleaming and twinkling like a star.

We had just got into a sort of ravine ; and it was just as though my companion had divined my thoughts, for I had seen what he did. "It certainly is not a star, Godfrey, for it is below the horizon's brink. And see—the bush rims up again above the light."

"At least it is directly in our route," was his reply. "We might as well reconnoitre. It is seldom that a shepherd shows a light in that manner, and I cannot divine the cause or source of this one."

"Would it not be better for me to advance on foot, think you, Godfrey, while you creep around still to the right with the horses ; and see, if possible, if there be an ambuscade ?"

"You can do so," said he. "Or, if you like it better, take charge of the animals, and I will advance."

But I preferred to act the scout, and said so. I was older than he.

"Be cautious, then," advised Godfrey. "If we are captured and robbed of our papers, with their definite account of the weakness of the outposts at this time, and the need of concentrated action to ensure safety, the outlaws of this black forest might sweep upon the stations and plunder them indiscriminately."

I understood all this as well as he ; and, leaving my companion to make his way as silently as might be off to the right, I crept forward. When within a short distance of the bush the light suddenly went out, bringing me to a direct standstill. But it soon gleamed again, and again went out, just as though the person or persons among whom it originated might be moving.

I got forward as swiftly as I could consistent with safety, and soon found myself near a hut, from the open doorway of which the light was gleaming. Not a sound from that direction greeted me. Utter silence seemed to reign in the rude cabin, and I thought it was deserted. A strange fascination urged me forward. I went creeping on, when suddenly there started up a peculiar rasping chirp, like that of a cricket. Intense though my desire was to enter that hut, an instant's reflection showed me the danger, and there came also over me a keen sense of my perilous position. I turned cautiously round, but the

very act put my shoulder into the brawny hand of a gigantic fellow who had been creeping up unawares. Without a moment's hesitation I discharged my pistol in his face, and wrenched myself clear from him, bounding off towards the south. Just then a little to the west of the south, a wild cry—a shout as if for help, smote upon my shrinking ear, and seemed to startle from sleep a score of wild noises and wilder echoes. An instant's confusion, an instant's indecision, would have been fatal to me. My first thought, as I wildly leaped through the brush, was—it is Lieutenant Godfrey attacked and calling for help—but the next moment I remembered that the call did not come from the direction which he would naturally be in at that moment. Doubtless it was a decoy, and away I rushed, regardless of it. A hundred yards due north from where I had evaded the clutch of the powerful outlaw, I met Godfrey. He was dashing wildly towards the direction of the cry.

"Mount," he rapidly ejaculated, "we have stumbled into a nest of lawless wretches. And if we get out of the bush safely, we shall have need to bless our stars."

I flung myself into the saddle, and we started; but the route was too rough for great speed.

"Hist! Good heaven!" muttered Godfrey, coming to a momentary standstill. "Haul to the right—to the right! Spur to the right!"

A peculiar, singing hum had for an instant filled our ears. We knew it well—at least, I did. It was the echo of the formidable native weapon—the boomerang—in its passage through the air. And all we could do was to catch our breath up; and our hearts seemed to cease to beat, as we shrank from the deadly rebound.

One, two, three—but a few seconds passed, when *ging!* came the infernal thing back directly between Godfrey and myself, startling our horses into a wild plunge. *Whizz!* went another unseen implement of death.

"We are doomed," gasped the lieutenant. "There's no escape if they follow us much longer."

"Hush, Godfrey; silence!"

Utter darkness surrounded us, and these terrible instruments of pursuing death afforded but little chance of escape. It was as well to spur on straight forward—if we could.

If we could! The rebound of the second implement hit home. There was a sort of *chuck*, and Godfrey tumbled from his horse. His bridle-rein I was lucky enough to seize, as the frightened beast reared, and would have trodden back upon the prostrate form.

"Are you killed, Godfrey?" I questioned, very inconsistently.

There was no response. Giving the horses a sweep on ahead, I whirled them about, and, dismounting, held by the bridle-reins, and stooping, felt for my companion.

He was not dead, for he was feebly struggling to rise to his elbow, while a choking gurgle in his throat made me fear the worst. With an herculean effort of the will and muscles—but in moments of danger, such as this, no one knows what strength he can put out—I flung him into his saddle, wheeled, steadyng him as well as I could, and dashed ahead, every instant fearing another attack. But I soon found that I must slacken my pace; perhaps come to a dead halt until morning; for Godfrey's body, rolling and tossing, threatened every moment to bounce completely from the saddle. He was either dead or insensible; that was evident. The full horror of my position burst upon me, starting the sweat from every pore. I must stop until daylight, to ascertain my companion's situation; not daring to strike a light with the matches in my pocket, for fear of discovering ourselves to the ruffians; or else abandon the poor fellow to his fate for a time, and ride on to the barracks for aid. This last thought I abandoned instantly; I could not leave him. Drawing gradually through the darkness towards the dense evergreens, I got him into the shelter. There I lifted him gently from the saddle and laid him on one side, away from the horses' feet, and tried what means I could in the darkness to restore him, if living, to consciousness.

By the loose sliding about of his right arm, I found that it was badly crushed about the shoulder, and conjectured that the choking rattling in his throat might have been caused by blood. Blood forced from the lungs by the terrific blow struck him in the recoil of the infernally simple instrument of death.

But these poor ministrations were interrupted by voices—decidedly human ones—breaking out from the other noises around. But too well comprehending that the miscreants were searching for their victim, or victims, near the spot where the deadly missile was likely to return, I had to spring to the heads of the horses. With a resolute but not irritating grip upon their nostrils, I checked any symptoms of restlessness which they might otherwise have exhibited. Twice before morning the low mutter of voices came too closely to us for comfort; especially when, near dawn, poor Godfrey's sufferings found vent in half conscious but irrepressible moans.

At last a gray light was perceptible, ushering in the dawn. I then arose, got the poor fellow upon his horse, and lashed him there with his bridle-reins and part of my own girths. Knowing that a slow, easy gait would in the end be no mercy, I spurred the animals into a long, rocking gallop; and about sunrise came into Melbourne, where a surgeon's services were quickly procured. Godfrey had fainted, and lopped forward upon his animal before we had made two miles of our remaining journey, and in that state was taken from the horse and conveyed into the barracks.

It was found that the lieutenant had sustained a compound fracture

of the arm above the elbow ; the upper end of the curved implement had also broken the collar-bone, and done some damage to the lungs.

But the shouts that I had heard upon both of those nights, alas ! proved others than decoys to lead Godfrey and myself into a snare. I was so impressed by the memory of them, that I procured Lieutenant Spaulding's permission to take out a squad of soldiers and beat the bush in the direction from whence they had proceeded. We found a shepherd murdered at the entrance of his fold.

Godfrey slowly came back to health. But I can assure you that it is not among my pleasantest memories, that night's vigils in the black forest, amid the strange moanings and mutterings of the Lone Continent.



WHEN THIS SHORT LIFE IS O'ER.

WHEN this short life is o'er
 Our kindred souls shall surely find each other
 On heaven's blissful shore ;
 Shall range those shining fields of light together,
 To part no more, no more !
 When this short life is o'er,
 So full of pain no human touch can lighten,
 So full of gloom no human heart can brighten,
 There will be pain and gloom no more ;
 But joy eternal
 And light supernal
 On Heaven's blissful shore.
 Our kindred souls no more by stern fate parted ;
 Temptation, sorrow, fear of sin, departed ;
 We shall not have to shun each other there.
 We shall not wander lone and broken-hearted,
 Cankered with ceaseless care,
 Wistfully looking for each other ever,
 Daring to seek each other never, never,
 While ev'n our common pain we may not share.
 No, naught of this on Heaven's blissful shore,
 Where we shall meet when this brief life is o'er.
 Then, courage ! fainting soul, despond no more !

ADAML: AN ALPINE STORY.

FROM THE GERMAN.

ADAML was a wretched little fellow ; a mite with the tiniest legs and arms, large feet and small hands, white in spite of every kind of hard and dirty work which had fallen to his share. His chest was narrow but his shoulders were broad, keeping his big round head, adorned with a profusion of dark, curly hair, close between them.

The boy could not turn his head without moving his whole body, for that reason he had never looked on his own back, and had he not had the opportunity of seeing it in the mirror of the duck-pond on clear summer days, he would never have beheld the enormous hump which nestled behind his right shoulder, and which was the cause of his being the poor little wretch he was. Other mirrors there were none in the rich peasant's house, for the maidens kept their own little looking-glasses—which they used to hang on the hook of the window during the performance of dressing—shut up in their boxes. But Adaml need not have seen his back to know what was the matter with it ; he felt the heavy burden keenly enough ; and the strokes which from all sides were showered upon it, and which made it none the lighter, he felt too.

Adaml has not always been the cripple you see him now. He was as fine a little boy of about two years old as you ever saw, when he first made his appearance in the "Kieselhof," in the arms of a wandering beggarwoman, who, unable to continue her way for sickness, found a resting place in a corner of the stable. They had given her straw to lie upon and plenty of food, and then left her alone. In the Kieselhof people had work enough upon their hands ; no one had time to question from whence she had come ; and when after three days the woman was well enough to start again, they did not ask her where she was going to. It was not so with the boy. He had been running about in the Hof, talking to every one in his own little way, and when he was to go he had accomplished a thing which no one had done before ; he had won the heart of the master of the house himself, to the great amazement of all around ; for the old peasant's heart was known to be a hard one.

"Thou art sick, and thy days may not be many," the "Bauer" had said at parting with the woman ; "what wilt thou do with the boy ? Why not leave him here in God's name ? I will care for him. He shall be kept like one of my household."

How great the struggle in her inmost heart, no one knew ; but after a few minutes of hesitation, the woman said, "In God's name !" and gave up the boy. "I will bring him up well," said the man, holding the little fellow in his arms, who, out of a pair of splendid

dark eyes, looked with childish surprise into the brown, hard face. "Yes," added the peasant, still softening his harsh voice, "as if it were my own little boy."

"The master may be strict with him," said the woman; "he may bring him up to hard work—he was born for that. But," added she, "would the master be kind enough to mind his straight limbs, that he does not become a cripple." The man promised, and the woman departed, with a large loaf of brown bread for the way. Bringing him back to the house the master introduced Adaml to the household by saying to some of the servants who happened to be near: "There is a fine little fellow, who from this day is to be one of us."

One of the servants, who somehow had the right to speak his mind to his master, exclaimed: "My! The Kieselhof Bauer taking a beggar-boy for his own child!" The Bauer smiled, half good-naturedly, half cunningly. "Why not build a step into heaven if one can do it easily?" he said.

Then he left Adaml to the care of the household, and the promised good education began. Mind, there was no mistress in the Kieselhof; no mother to govern with love; to put things straight whenever they went wrong, and to keep straight things from going crooked. The Bauer was old, and his sons and daughters were kept no better than the other servants in their father's house.

Adaml began by being cherished and spoilt by half the household, and hated and illused by the other half; but by degrees, as the boy grew older, he learned to do little jobs for both parties, which, easy at first, became harder and harder, until the boy was at length the servant and slave of everybody. He never got any certain work appointed to him, but everybody used him for everything; and however handy and willing the boy may have been, he still could not discharge his duties to so many masters to their satisfaction. They soon united in despising the little fellow, and, what was still worse, in beating him, the Bauer giving the example. Had he not promised him a good education?—and his straight limbs?—"Bah!" the Bauer had many a time laughed at the woman's anxiety in the presence of the servants. "Has any one of us got such broad shoulders and strong back?" he would ask.

And so they went on for years, beating, striking, pushing, kicking him, knocking him down, treading upon him. Whoever wanted him to do anything gave him a kick to make him set to work quickly. Some drove him on by blows during the work, and were sure to give him a good thrashing at the end for not having done it better; whilst others were ready to chastise him whenever they could get hold of him, for not doing their own work first of all, and for keeping them waiting.

But Adaml was made to suffer not for his own faults—imagined faults—only. The unhappy victim had to atone for the sins of the whole household. Whatever went wrong, whatever was broken or spoiled,

whatever mischief was done, it was as sure as sure can be that one way or another Adaml was found out to be the first and last cause of all.

What wonder that in time Adaml became the miserable wretch, the cripple he was ! Where is a trace now left of his original beauty ? His eyes, dark glistening stars still, are overshadowed by eyelashes and frowns, and a continually scowling forehead ; his rich jet hair, curling down on his shoulders, serves but to make his appearance the more grotesque ; his harsh voice and unintelligible speech contributed to put him in the eyes of his fellows on a level with a beast of the field, and now that they, through ill treatment, had brought him into that state, they despise him, laugh at him, and hate him accordingly.

They all despised him, we said. But we must admit one exception. One person there was who did not despise him ; did not even laugh at his infirmities. No ; Afra did not—Afra the “kuhmagg” did not.

An orphan like himself, Afra had come to the Kieselhof nobody knew how ; and but for the prior presence of Adaml, she might have taken up his position. In every large Hof you will meet some such unhappy being, who seems to be planted there to gather upon his head the wrath of all around ; to be the point of concentration of the general hatred. But the place of the “hadern” in the Kieselhof had been taken up, and Afra awaited a better lot. To her share had fallen the service of the cattle, and the brutes being less exacting masters and more grateful than Adaml’s, her fate became a comparatively happy one.

In summer Afra had to join the daughters and higher maid-servants of the house when they drove the cows on the “Alm” (the High Alps). There, high up in the wilderness of the highlands, between heaven and earth ; left for weeks and months to herself and the cattle ; exposed to every kind of weather, fair and foul, but free like any of the fairy kings supposed to dwell in those regions, she grew up like a plant in its particularly suited soil, having sunshine and rain in abundance. And she loved that soil ; all her affections were bound up in the great and wonderful nature surrounding her. To stand upon a high level, thousands of feet above common humankind, with her feet firm upon the ground, her back against the rock, her hands upon her hips, the storm raging around her head, the wind tearing her hair, the shower drenching her scanty garments, was her utmost delight. “Ah !” she used to say, “what do I care for all mankind ? the rocks, the clouds, the four winds are my kith and kin !”

At fourteen, when Adaml, who was but a few months younger, had scarcely obtained the height of three feet, Afra was a grown up woman, measuring more than five. Strictly taken, she was not a beauty, but her fresh, sunburnt, ever-smiling face ; her round and snowwhite

teeth; her sparkling, bluish-grey eyes; her rich sandy hair; her whole frame and carriage, presented the picture of life and health. And hale as her body was her heart.

When in autumn they had driven their cattle down from the highlands, and settled in the Kieselhof for the winter, Afra, who was the only one to notice the boy's miserable condition, found time to care for Adaml when her duties to the cows, which in the stables were not so numerous, were performed, and the spinning room did not claim her hands and pretty voice.

Afra, who loved movement and activity above all, was strongly moved to pity by the little fellow's helplessness. The strong girl began to feel in a sisterly way for that being who, although of the same age, looked a child beside her. She would stand up for him against whoever would illuse him—be it the master himself;—she could do it, for she was a general favourite. In the country, strength and dauntless courage such as the girl possessed always force people to yield a certain amount of respect.

"What business hast thou to interfere with the boy?" said the Bauer to Afra one day.

"What business?" repeated she, her hand upon her hip, looking him full in the face. "Bauer, it is a long time since I wanted to tell thee my mind. With that child thou hast not built thee a step into heaven; rather somewhere else."

She had spoken in defiance, risking the worst, in a moment of disgust, when she had just been thinking of leaving the Kieselhof, together with Adaml, to seek work elsewhere, expecting her dismissal as answer to her bold speech. But she waited awhile in astonishment. The Bauer at last merely turned round and walked away in silence. From this day she enjoyed, unmolested, the right of being Adaml's protectress.

When she was in the Kieselhof she managed to get him better food and decent clothes. He wore her shoes; he turned to her when he wanted his things mended. He was much laughed at for wearing women's shoes and standing under the protection of a girl, but Afra told him not to mind; and being asked by a fellow-servant why she took the trouble to mend his clothes, she answered that "God had given to her ten fingers to sew as well as to any other woman, and her cows did not require any garments."

The years went on. Afra was one of the first cowmaids now. There were other people besides Adaml who liked to pay visits in the stables; in fact, all the men servants courted her, and even the sons of the house did not despise a chat with her.

Adaml kept away from the stable whenever there was company:—except Afra, he hated all mankind, and not without cause. He showed it also by unmistakable signs, but they only laughed at his anger.

Afra herself did not care much for her visitors ; she had no great conversational powers ; what she had to say was simply worded, strongly expressing the truth. When she said, "I don't care for you all," they knew it was so, and she had no preference for one of them. She liked best to talk to her cows, which were sure to understand her simple heart, and to Adaml, whom alone *she* understood. Gazing into the soft, dark eyes of the boy, which upon her alone looked in their natural splendour, she seemed to read his thoughts, to which his unready tongue was unable to give utterance.

The old carpenter of the Kieselhof had died, and a young one had come. He was a handsome fellow, tall and straight as a fir-tree. He too had soon found the way to the stables ; and he could not often have heard Afra's "Get thee away now, thou hast taken up enough of my time," for he usually stopped with her for hours.

Adaml one day was sitting on the top of the wooden partition which formed a little room for Afra in the stable, without reaching up to the top ceiling. Looking down as he had done before to contemplate the girl sitting on her box and sewing, he beheld Afra and Nantl the carpenter sitting side by side, he with his arm round her waist, chatting merrily.

At first Adaml thought Afra would get up and drive the fellow out of the stable, as he had seen her do before to others for the similar offence. But Afra did not stir, and listened to the carpenter's wooing. Parting with her at last—Adaml had thought he would never go—he kissed her ; and, to Adaml's amazement, Afra did not rebuke him. But Nantl had soon occasion to call for help ; for the moment he had passed the door, the cripple from his high position had sprung down upon his neck, and was strangling him with furious violence. Seeing Afra and others coming to Nantl's rescue, Adaml let his prey loose, and gliding down from his back fell upon the floor half senseless, when a heavy stroke from the carpenter's hand completely stunned him.

Adaml did not know how he had left the stables that night, but he never went in again ; and this time Afra did not go to seek him.

That was in the beginning of the winter, which became a hard one for Adaml ; whilst in Afra's heart spring had set in, in spite of the white snow covering all around the maiden's dwelling, and the icicles adorning her door and window-frame.

But the longest winter even comes to an end, and spring in nature came too, at last.

Afra had to go up on the Alm as head-cowmaid, taking up a large herd of cattle—one of the cows already belonging to her. She required a driver, and asked the Kieselhof Bauer to give her Adaml. "It will do him good," she said.

In Afra's idea a summer on the Alm must bring to every wound its balm.

Nantl came to see his love in the highlands, but being sent on duty to other places, sometimes far off, he could not come often, and Afra and Adaml were left for weeks alone together.

They went on quietly for some time, doing their duty during the day, and chatting together over their soup at night. Both avoided speaking of Nantl. But Afra soon noticed, and that to her great surprise, that the healthy air of the highlands did not produce upon her companion the effect she had expected. He became daily more melancholy.

"Adaml," she used to say, "eat and drink, and enjoy thy free life in God's wonderful nature, and be thankful."

But her words were lost upon him; his appetite failed, and work itself had no charm for him; staring at her became soon his sole occupation. Afra did not scold him for his laziness. He had worked hard enough all his life, she thought. He may take his rest now. It is like a long Sunday to make up for all his lost ones. But her heart was sore when she observed his melancholy. She would slip away from his presence, and, sitting behind the hut, after racking her brain in vain to find a remedy for his illness, which visibly took hold of him, she would have a good cry.

She knew the root of his disease was in his heart, and felt there was no help for it.

One day Adaml could not eat at all; at least one cannot call eating his devouring Afra with his eyes. He followed her about, keeping his gaze upon her; and when they came in for the evening, he took his place at the hearth where she was preparing the soup.

He did not say a word, but looked at her; and Afra, trying how it would do to leave him quite alone, pretended not to notice his ways. There he stood staring at her, as she put the smoking dish on the table, said the blessing, and began to eat. She called him; he did not stir, but remained immovable; whilst she said her evening prayers, and when she got up from her knees, wanting him to depart that she might go to rest, he was still standing and staring. She sat down on the foot of her bed, patiently waiting till he should be gone; but being very sleepy, and seeing that it was not the way to get rid of him, she at last exclaimed: "Adaml, by and by thou wilt become a complete fool."

This broke the ice. Adaml began to speak in a clear, ringing voice, as he had never done before, with passionate vehemence.

"A fool? would that I were, not to see things as they are, and myself as I am. Everybody else is as God made him—but not I. They have thrown me down and trampled me under their feet until they have changed the frame my Creator had given me. They have broken my spirits, and poisoned my heart; they have brought me down to a level with the beasts of the field; and now they despise and hate that beast, their own work! But I am a man, with thoughts and feelings beyond any of them—and—and—"

"Adaml," said Afra, "thou oughtest to eat thy soup and go to bed. I never despised thee, nor said anything against thee."

But the boy was not to be silenced so easily. He spoke for the first time in his life, and he would speak out all.

"And now I am a cripple, and the other boys of my age are grown up tall and straight like trees. I was never taught anything, and cannot say a word for myself, whilst the others are learned and know everything, and they call me a fool: and as long as they will do so, I shall never be able to say a sensible word, because grief and anger will not allow me to think reasonably; and now thyself thou art turning against me, and calling me a fool as the others do!"

"But, Adaml, I never meant it! thou art quite rational; I know it; and one might wish everybody had thy good heart. In my mind thou art standing ever so high above all those who torment and persecute thee!"

The boy's dark eyes glistened with sudden joy; stretching out his hand towards her he exclaimed: "Then thou dost not despise me—dost not hate me—perhaps even likkest me? and wouldest take me as I am?"

Afra, frightened, recoiled from his open arms. "Look here," she said, with quivering lips; "look here, I do not reject thee because thou art not grown quite as tall and straight as many other fellows, who must become soldiers and may be crippled any day in the war; not because thy tongue is heavy and cannot express thy feelings; neither because thou art not learned; not because thou possessest neither house nor field: no, not for all that or other things thou mightest imagine; but I have already another lover; thou knowest Nantl the carpenter—I have promised to be his wife."

"I might have known it!" cried Adaml, all his ten fingers disappearing into his thick, curly hair. "Serve me right for speaking nonsense. Now I know what I was in too great hurry to hear—thou art right—I am a fool!"

"Adaml, thou wilt not leave us. I will hold thee as my brother all my life long; I couldn't do without thee, Adaml."

"Well," he said, with assumed calmness, seeing her tears, "I am now twenty-one years of age, when people usually settle in life. Now that I know it is all over; that I can't have thee; I must settle to remain lonely and bear it as I can."

He made a few steps to go, then turned once more. "But I shall never forget that thou hast done me nothing but kindness through all thy life. I shall pray heaven may protect thee and reward thee. Maybe I shall find once an opportunity of showing my gratitude to thee."

He staggered out of the hut.

Afra cried herself to sleep. Until her twenty-first year she had never known such a grief. And Adaml? He got no rest that night, poor Adaml!

Towards the end of the summer Nantl's visits were more frequent; and Afra, who had caught a little of Adaml's melancholy, brightened up again. Her cheerfulness however was not to be lasting.

Nantl was a handsome, jolly fellow, beloved by every one, and Afra might have been proud of her lover. But oh, how often had she begged him to give up the wicked practice of deerstealing — to give it up for her sake. But in vain. He would not listen to her. He would be sure to bring his gun, disjointed into several pieces, and carefully hidden under his coat, whenever he came to see her on the Alm ; and then leave her at night to "wildern" in the mountains, and—never missing his aim—shoot whatever game came in his sight. Then, after midnight, he would knock at her door and ask her to take in and conceal what unlawfully had come into his possession. She, fearing and trembling, would take in the deerstealer with his load, risking for his safety her own honour and reputation. What could she do? To refuse him entrance would have been to give him up to the guards and huntsmen who usually were close upon his heels. They would pass soon after he had entered the hut, and just stop in order to ask if she had seen somebody go by.

"My!" she would say; "do I look out for people who may pass? It is best for a lonely girl like me to shut her door and window and put her head under the pillow when she hears the poacher's gun."

"Of course! Afra is a very timid girl, she is known to be afraid at night," they would say, laughing. And she would reply, "Well, the wild hunter is nobody's friend. You may laugh at me if you like."

Look into her hut for the criminal? They never thought of such a thing. The girl had always been truthful, and people knew her to be so.

But what a grief it was for her! how wretched she felt! Her conscience, so quiet until her twenty-first year, now never ceased pricking her—never, by night or day. She almost felt herself guilty of the theft, and would never be able to raise her head again to look full to the face an honest person.

Adaml did his best to comfort her. Nantl loved her, and was sure to give up his wicked ways when once she should have become his wife. Afra herself made up her mind never to marry Nantl unless he swore to give up the wildern; she would give him an ultimatum the day before their wedding: swear that he would give up deerstealing or leave her for ever. This heroic resolution somewhat calmed her mind, and the heavy burden on her conscience became lighter.

One night Nantl came earlier than usual, bent under the heavy load of an enormous roebuck, which the three friends took pains to conceal in the dairy.

"The moon is bright to-night, and the huntsmen have been about all day long. They are sure to trace thee to this hut," said Afra.

Nantl did but laugh, and they sat down to supper. Adaml had done first; he put down his spoon and glided out of the room. One sharp look out into the clear moonlight, and he came back noiselessly and managed to get into the dairy unnoticed by the lovers. They, however, were soon disturbed by hearing the barking of dogs close to their house. Instantly the huntsmen knocked violently at the door, and with loud and commanding voices asked for entrance.

The lovers sprang up from their seats in a moment. Afra, never losing her presence of mind, caused Nantl to enter the place under the hearth where she used to keep her wood, of which the greater part was now burned away; and gathering the rest of the brushwood lying about, she carefully covered him with it, by means of which the hole appeared filled up.

Throwing one last anxious look back to the hearth, she went on tip-toe to her bed, and from there began calling out, "I am coming, I am coming! Can you not wait a minute until I have put something on?" While she was talking to the impatient people outside, she had taken off the upper part of her garment, thrown the coverlet of her bed on the floor, and thrown the latter into disorder. Then she moved to the door and opened it, carefully shading with her hand the light in her little tin lamp, asking at the same time what was the matter.

"Give up the deerstealer," they cried; and the door, which she wanted to keep half shut, was flung open. Three men appeared at it.

"The deerstealer! Why, what can I know of a deerstealer?"

"Why then dost thou tremble if thou knowest nothing about him?"

"I am not trembling—I am shivering. I should like to see any of you not shivering when you are called out of your bed into the cold night air. There, let me shut the door, my light is going out."

"Never mind, Afra, we have a lantern. This time we are sure he is here, and we shall have him soon. Much better for thee to tell us at once where he is."

Thus speaking, all three had entered the hut.

A thought flashed through the girl's head. Giving up the deer and letting Nantl escape seemed to her of two evils the lesser. To the repeated question "Where is he?" she at last answered by pointing to the door of the dairy.

But she had made a false reckoning; two of the men entered the dairy indeed, but the third kept behind in the room watching her.

Afra turned to the wall and wrung her hands; there was no escape.

The noisy laughter of the two men in the dairy brought her to herself. "My! should you ever have believed it—he, the daring deer stealer, whom we have been seeking so long!—and we seeing him every day and letting him go free—it is too bad!"

Afra ran in, followed by the man. Adaml was crouching at the side

of the deer, the poacher's gun in his hand, looking with glistening eyes at the men who led him away without tarrying any longer.

During that scene, which lasted but a few minutes, Afra had been moving up and down, from Adaml to the hearth, and to the group again. She felt sure Nantl would come out from his hiding-place, and prevent the innocent Adaml being taken to prison by giving up himself.

He seemed to tarry, however, and she, turning to the hearth, whispered distinctly, "Nantl, thou wilt not allow the boy to go in thy place?" But no answer came, and Adaml was gone; the door too was shut, and all was quiet in the hut again.

Afra fell upon a chair, crying bitterly. Now the brushwood under the hearth suddenly moved, and Nantl's head appeared. He cautiously looked round. "They are actually gone!" he exclaimed with satisfaction; and bringing his tall figure from under the hearth he joyfully cried, jumping high up: "Escaped! escaped! but this time I was very near being caught!"

Afra sprang upon her feet, her whole frame expressing grief and anger. "Nantl!" she cried, vehemently; "thou art a miserable wretch! Guilty, as thou art, to let the innocent boy be carried away in thy place!"

"Afra!" said Nantl, in great surprise, "so much fuss about a cripple like him!"

But Afra had opened wide the door, and drawing herself up to her full height, she pointed out of it with the air and mien of an empress. "Nantl, wilt thou now, on the spot, hasten after the men, and, confessing thy fault, give Adaml his freedom? Or, if such is not thy intention—never come into my sight again!"

Nantl made the best of the opportunity, and speedily took himself away, without saying a word of farewell.

Afra waited, sitting before her door, but Adaml never came. Nantl could not have done her command.

She had no mind to go in again that night, and the first ray of the rising sun found her crying before her hut.

Two days and nights she spent waiting, crying, praying; neither Adaml nor Nantl appeared. She could not discern which was the greater grief—the baseness of her lover or the misfortune of her friend. On the third day she could not bear it any longer; she left hut and cows to a milk boy who had happened to come up, and drove down to the Kieselhof Bauer. The old man stared at her account of Adaml's heroic self-sacrifice.

"Well I never!" he exclaimed; "one might have thought that boy has got enough to carry with his hump, and now he is taking the sins of the world upon him."

They put on their best apparel, took the newest vehicle of the Hof,

and drove in state down into the town. There they were allowed to see Adaml, but that was all. They could neither make Adaml confess his innocence, nor produce the real criminal. After a long day of trouble and excitement they had to make for home, leaving Adaml in his dungeon.

Afra was on her Alm again, feeling wretched. The Kieselhof Bauer and the whole household did their best to find Nantl; they spared neither pains nor money, and after a fortnight they succeeded in getting hold of him. He had been hiding himself in the wilderness all that time.

The master went again to town to fetch Adaml himself and bring him home, where the whole household was ready to receive him with joy; and he presented him with a new coat and hat and sent him up on the Alm.

Adaml now stood before Afra: "When I went in his place," he said sadly, "it was to save him, but not to be called back again. And now the fellow has been silly enough to allow himself to be caught."

"Thou wast silly, but he was basely wicked," said Afra, stretching out her hand to him. "I shall not see him again—no, never—I have sworn it. And as for thee, Adaml, if—if thou could'st think it worth the while—asking me once more.—"

"What!" cried Adaml, ask thee once more? If I had to ask thee a hundred times, and wait for thee a thousand years!"

"We need not wait so very long," said Afra, laughing. "I am just about to buy my second cow, and I shall make the Kieselhof Bauer give thee a third one—he owes something to thee. I don't see why we should not get into house-keeping at once."

"Tuheeh!" cried Adaml, throwing his new hat high up into the air.

When, two years ago, I was wandering on foot in the highlands between Tyrol, Bavaria, and Salzburg, I found hospitality in a small hut. The mistress of the modest home being one of the finest women I met in those countries, I was rather shocked at seeing a little humpbacked man presenting himself as the master. At supper I heard the whole story from Afra, who is proud of her husband. I cannot keep back from the friendly reader that the two little boys who were fast asleep at night when I came, in the morning turned out to be the healthiest little things I ever met, with the mother's beautiful hair, and the father's glorious dark eyes. And Adaml is sure to take care of their straight limbs.

IN THE CLOISTERS.

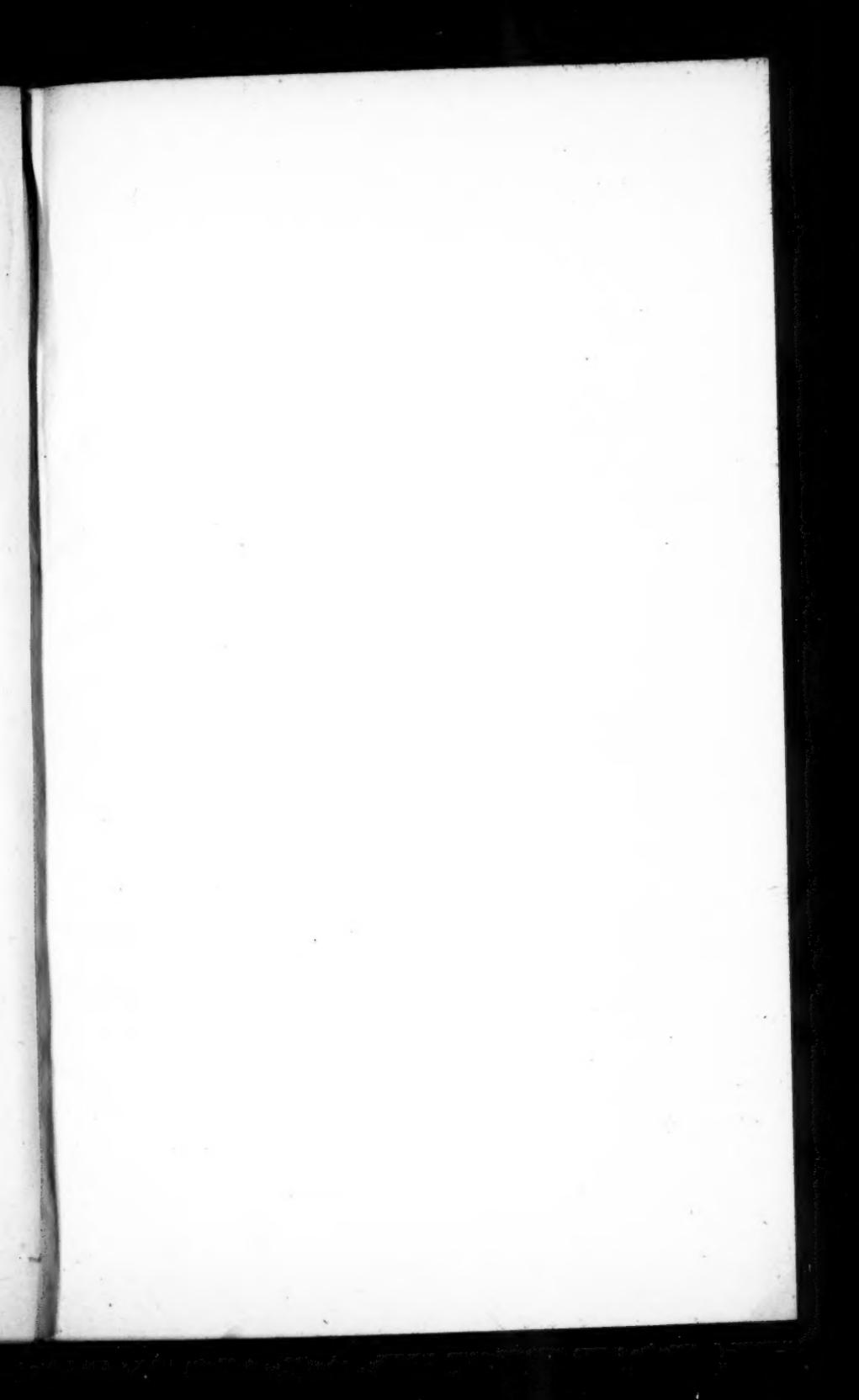
AN ancient English city,—and a grave
 Beneath the shadow of cathedral walls,
 Where solemn elms their bowery branches wave,
 And tender rain of April softly falls ;
 Hoarse-voicéd rooks,—a restless sable crowd,—
 Whirl with strange clangour round the bleak old towers,
 Drifting and meeting, closing like a cloud
 Above grim bosses and gray stone-wrought flowers.

Great mouldering heights of rugged sculpture rise,
 Grisly with heads of dragons,—worn and bold,
 Coloured by weather-stains of thousand dyes,
 Tinged with the lichen's melancholy gold ;
 While here and there some shattered saint looks down
 From his dark niche betwixt the pillars high,
 Or stately king still wears his stony crown,
 And with calm brow confronts the changeful sky.

There, on that lowly grave, the snowdrop springs,
 There smile the dim blue violets of March ;
 And like a sound of mighty rushing wings
 Through the low western doorway's pointed arch
 Sweeps forth the deep prayer-music o'er the mound,
 And dies far out amid the busy strife
 Beyond the minster-gates,—where toil hath drowned
 The faint sweet echoes of eternal Life.

Soft moss of shady green and pearly gray
 Has clustered thickly on the time-worn stone ;
 Dark ivy-chains, that strengthen day by day,
 About the grave their clasping bonds have thrown ;
 And often I go back through misty years
 Along dim paths where love's old wild-flowers grow,
 To seek that sheltered place with quiet tears
 Where one true heart was buried long ago.

SARAH DOUDNEY.





M. ELLEN EDWARDS.

EDMUND EVANS

LISTENING TO THE BELLS AS SHE PICKED THE MIGNONETTE.